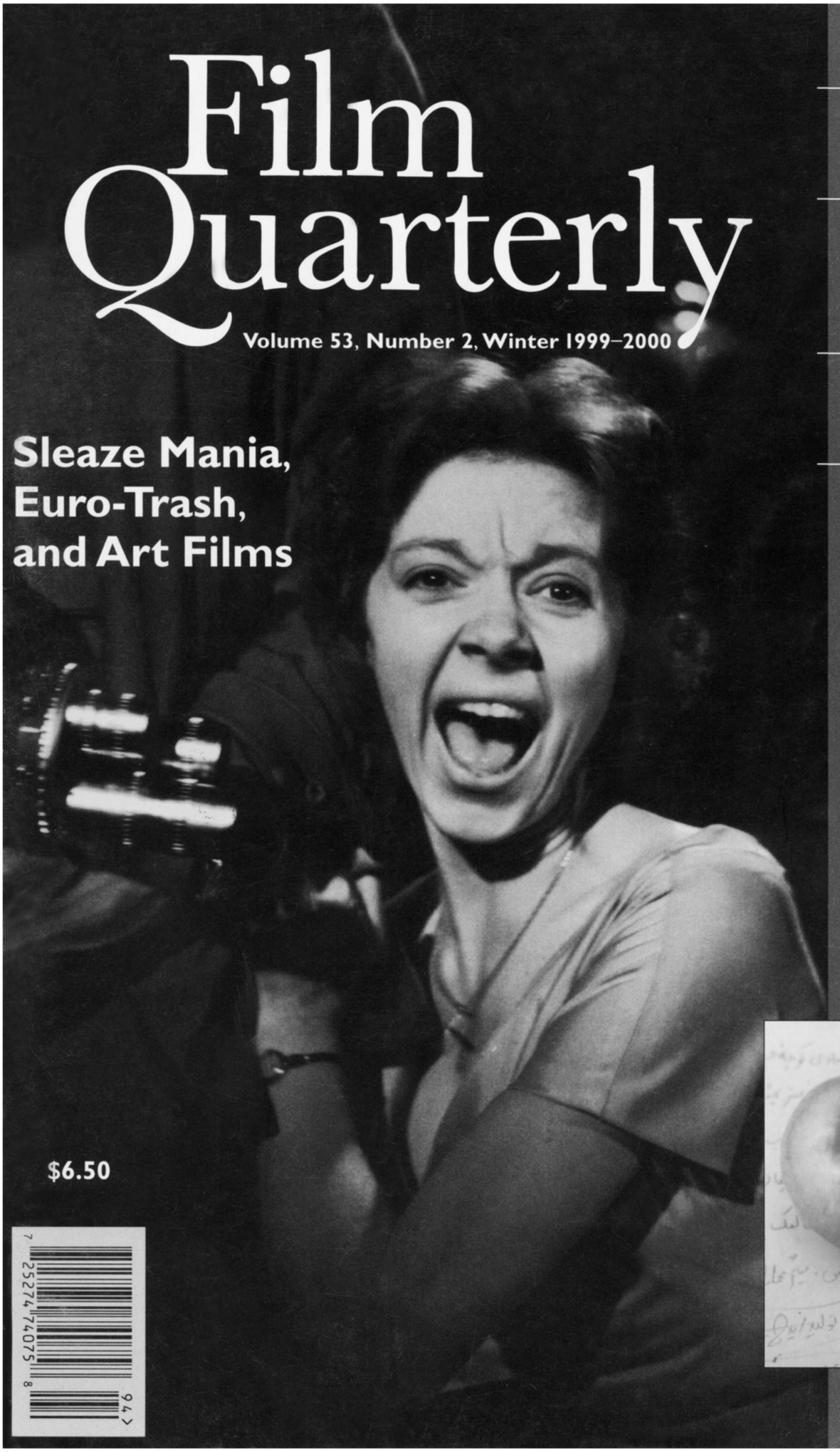
Film Quarterly

Volume 53, Number 2, Winter 1999–2000



Sleaze Mania, Euro-Trash, and Art Films

Interview with Zhang Yimou

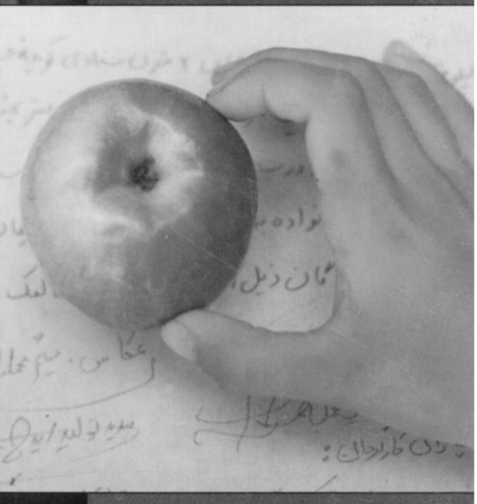
Paul Verhoeven & Cinematic Derealization

Remembrance of Films Lost

The Return of the Phantom

REVIEW

The Apple



$6.50

7 25274 74075 8 94

film still from *The End of the Road,* 1919

"Bold! Daring! Shocking! True!"

A History of Exploitation Films, 1919–1959

ERIC SCHAEFER

"The exploitation film has enjoyed a cult following as 'turkey cinema,' 'trash,' midnight movie camp, psychotronic cinema, and the object of ridicule on *Mystery Science Theater 3000.* Yet Schaefer's book shows us that it must be central to any understanding of the way Hollywood cinema operates. This groundbreaking work will open up an entirely new field of film history."—Henry Jenkins, author of *Science Fiction Audiences: Watching* Doctor Who *and* Star Trek

This meticulously researched, interdisciplinary study is informed by a wide range of sources and offers a full filmography.

488 pages, 59 b&w photos, paper $21.95

The Skin of the Film

Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses

LAURA U. MARKS

"A marvelous interweaving of theory and historiography. . . . Marks explains—with rich detail—a whole range of recent cultural productions in film and video and makes those works come to life. *The Skin of the Film* suggests important ways to extend film theory."—Dana Polan, University of Southern California

304 pages, 77 b&w photos, paper $18.95

NOW FROM DUKE

Savage Theory

Cinema as Modern Magic

RACHEL O. MOORE

"[N]o work has interrelated classical theorists in the manner Moore does. The book possesses intellectual grace and energy, as well as incisive jabs of pure insight. Beautifully written, engaging, and witty, it clears a new path for film theory."—Tom Gunning, author of *An Invention of the Devil? Religion and Early Cinema*

256 pages, 13 b&w photos, paper $17.95

Kids' Media Culture

MARSHA KINDER, EDITOR

"*Kids' Media Culture* is a significant contribution to the theory and history of childhood and adolescence. An extremely impressive range of topics are covered: different media and consumption practices, different historical periods, and considerations of the complexities of gender, class, and race."—Eric Smoodin, author of *Animating Culture: Hollywood Cartoons from the Sound Era*

376 pages, 44 illus., paper $18.95

Console-ing Passions

Television, History, and American Culture

Feminist Critical Essays

MARY BETH HARALOVICH AND LAUREN RABINOVITZ, EDITORS

"Reading this collection will be a tonic for anyone wearied by ongoing assaults on feminism and cultural studies as having passed their prime; these essays suggest a vital field of inquiry and a vibrant political spirit. . . ."—Henry Jenkins, editor of *Children's Culture Reader*

232 pages, 25 b&w photos, paper $17.95

Console-ing Passions

A Deleuzian Century?

IAN BUCHANAN, EDITOR

Originally published as a special issue of *South Atlantic Quarterly,* these essays constitute a critical and focused engagement with Deleuze and his work.

272 pages, paper $18.95

DUKE UNIVERSITY PRESS Box 90660 • Durham, NC 27708-0660 • toll-free 1-888-651-0122

Film Quarterly

Volume 53, Number 2, Winter 1999–2000

EDITOR
Ann Martin

BOOK REVIEW EDITOR
Stephen Prince

NEW YORK EDITOR
William Johnson

LOS ANGELES EDITOR
David Ehrenstein

LONDON EDITOR
Edward Buscombe

ROME EDITOR
Gideon Bachmann

EDITORIAL BOARD
Leo Braudy
Ernest Callenbach
Brian Henderson
Marsha Kinder
Linda Williams

INDEXED IN
Access
Art Index
Arts and Humanities
Book Review Index
Citation Index
Film Literature Index
Humanities Index
Index to Critical Film Reviews
International Index to Film Periodicals
MLA Directory of Periodicals
Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature

TYPE & DESIGN
Irene Imfeld, Berkeley, CA

PRINTED IN USA BY
Allen Press, Lawrence, KS

Tan Ye
From the Fifth to the Sixth Generation: An Interview with Zhang Yimou 2

Joan Hawkins
Sleaze Mania, Euro-Trash, and High Art: The Place of European Art Films in American Low Culture 14

J. P. Telotte
Verhoeven, Virilio, and "Cinematic Derealization" 30

John Gianvito
Remembrance of Films Lost 39

David Robinson
Return of the Phantom 43

REVIEWS

William Johnson
The Apple 47

BOOK REVIEWS 50

Cover: Anna Massey in *Peeping Tom* (see page 14); inset: still from *The Apple* (see page 47).

Film Quarterly (ISSN 0015-1386) is published quarterly by the University of California Press, Berkeley, CA 94720. Periodicals postage paid at Berkeley, California, and at additional mailing offices. Canadian GST #R122058662. POSTMASTER: send address changes to Film Quarterly, University of California Press, 2000 Center Street, #303, Berkeley, California 94704-1223.

Subscriptions are $25 per year for individuals, $63 per year for institutions. Subscribers outside North America, add $20 for postage. Single issues are $6.50 for individuals, $18 for institutions. Domestic claims for nonreceipt of issues should be made within 90 days of the month of publication, overseas claims within 180 days.

Subscription requests and requests for advertising rate cards should be sent to the Journals Department, manuscript enquiries to the Editor, Film Quarterly, at the University of California Press, 2000 Center Street, #303, Berkeley, California 94704-1223. Unsolicited manuscripts should be accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of American National Standard for Information Sciences—Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI Z39.48-1994. ∞

Back issues subsequent to Volume 38 (1984-85) write to the University of California Press, 2000 Center Street, #303, Berkeley, California 94704-1223. Printed on recycled paper. The views expressed in the articles are those of the authors only.

© 2000 by the Regents of the University of California.

Tan Ye

From the Fifth to the Sixth Generation

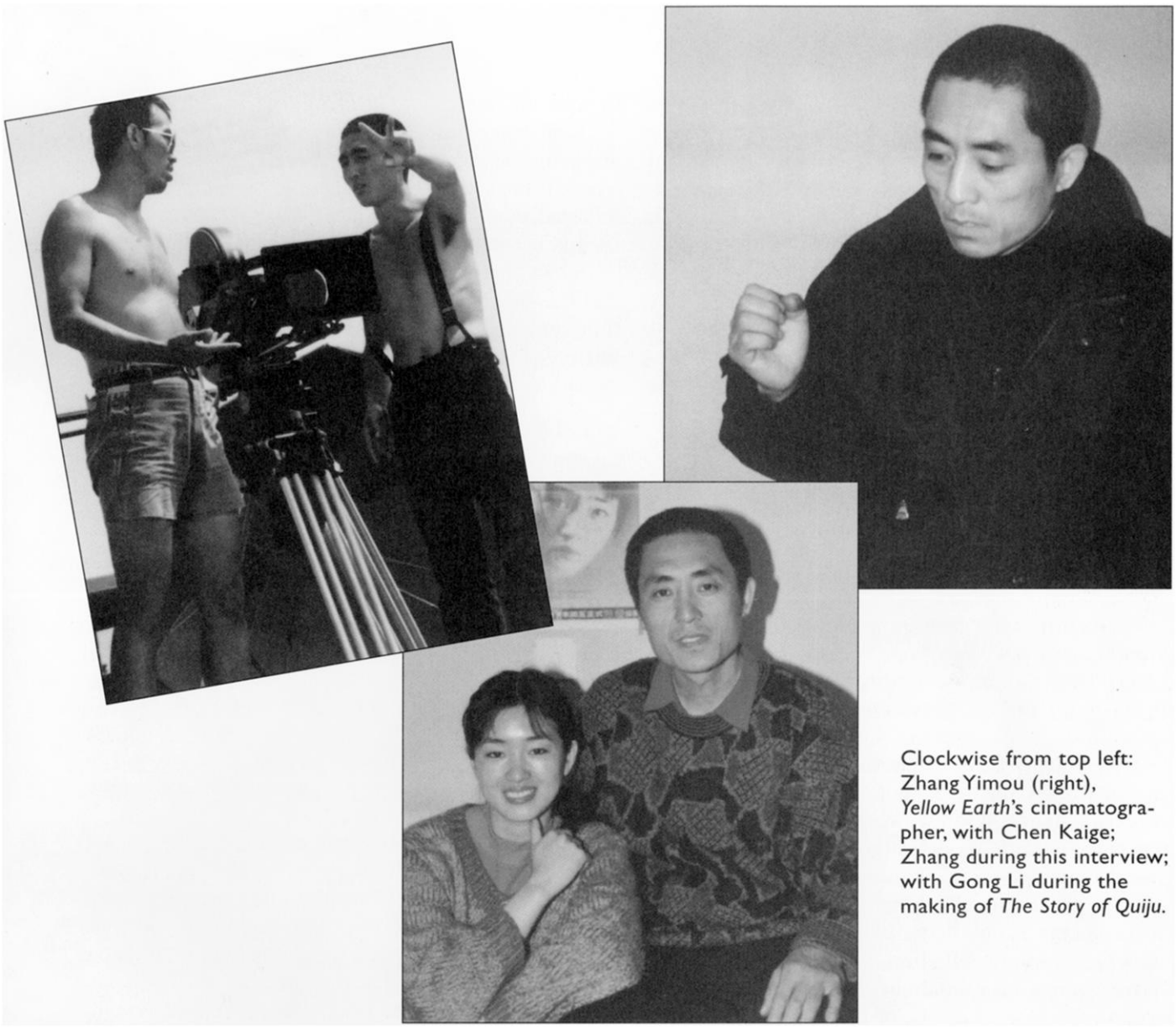
An Interview with Zhang Yimou

The color red is the signature for most of Zhang Yimou's films: red sorghum (*Red Sorghum*), red silk (*Judou*), red lantern (*Raise the Red Lantern*), red dress (*The Story of Qiuju*), and so on. All sensuous, all symbolic. Classical Chinese theater is full of color symbols: a red face suggests loyalty; a black face, bravery; and a white face, evil. New China inherited some old color symbolism and created some new color symbols, among which red is by far the most important. It is the color of revolution: red flags, little red books, Red Guards, and of course the red sun, which is the symbol of Chairman Mao. But what does Zhang Yimou's red suggest?

Some commentators liken the red setting sun at the end of *Red Sorghum* to a Japanese national flag; some think the red lanterns in *Raise the Red Lantern* reveal the sexual dominance of the patriarchal despot—but the setting sun would also have been used to elegize the perished heroine and the red lanterns may also connote the fulfillment of the concubines' desire. Zhang Yimou's red color, like his other symbols, defies narrow interpretation, because it is at once an inheritance from and a rebellion against tradition. Red is no longer simply a color of celebration as in old China or a color of revolution as in modern China; nor is it a color of malice. Perhaps it should be treated as a mood. As Zhang Yimou once said, "We Chinese have been too moderate, too reserved . . . the boundless red of sorghum fields arouses sensory excitement . . . it encourages unrestrained lust for life."

Lust for life was restrained in China, a fact that Zhang Yimou knows all too well. He had a miserable childhood: his father was a Nationalist officer, hence a "bad element"; his mother was a medical doctor, not a good element either. When the Cultural Revolution broke out, he was sent to the country to be "re-educated" by peasants. Then he became a porter. Red to him is the primary color of life—symbolically, realistically, and artistically. While still unable to earn enough food, Zhang Yimou sold his blood to buy his first camera. It was the pictures he took with that camera that won him the opportunity to study cinematography at Beijing Film Academy in 1978.

After graduation, Zhang Yimou became known as the best cameraman in China: *Yellow Earth* (1984), a film he made with another Fifth Generation director, Chen Kaige, won eleven international awards. In 1986 he played a peasant in Wu Tianming's *Old Well*, which brought him the title of best actor at the 1987 Tokyo International Film Festival and the opportunity to make his own film. His directing debut, *Red Sorghum*, was awarded the Golden Bear at the Berlin Film Festival in 1988. Two years later, his *Judou* received the Luis Buñuel Award at the Cannes Film Festival. At the 1992 Venice Film Festival, with *The Story of Qiuju*, Zhang Yimou received the Golden Lion. Since *Yellow Earth*, Zhang Yimou's films have won more than 40 awards. His most recent work, *Not One Less* (*Yige ye buneng shao*), which is about a young teacher's efforts to keep students from cutting class in a poor village school, took the top prize at the 1999 Venice Film Festival. This was the same film that was so misunderstood by the committee of the Cannes Film Festival that Zhang Yimou withdrew it from the festival. If we realize that post-Tiananmen Square censorship is still hanging over Chinese filmmakers' heads, we will come to appreciate not only Zhang's artistic talent but also his talent as a political strategist.



Clockwise from top left: Zhang Yimou (right), *Yellow Earth*'s cinematographer, with Chen Kaige; Zhang during this interview; with Gong Li during the making of *The Story of Quiju*.

No contemporary Chinese film is totally free of political messages. They are either imposed by the authorities or implied by the artist. For those who are interested in this kind of message, Zhang's color red does carry one. But, contrary to what many critics say, it may not be purely political. Sick of Chairman Mao's theory and practice of "class struggle," all the Fifth Generation directors try not to be obtrusively political. Zhang Yimou's red is rather a commemoration of freedom, exuberance, and the most primal desires and aspirations, which have been denied by both Confucianism and Communism.

Most of Zhang Yimou's films speak for the downtrodden and the rebellious. *Red Sorghum* glorifies the elopement of a winery owner's wife with a sedan carrier; *Judou* supports an affair between a worker and his boss's wife; *Raise the Red Lantern* sides with four concubines and treats their husband as a villain; *The Story of Quiju* praises an ordinary peasant woman for her courage to sue the village chief; *To Live* attributes the misery of a meek family to the power struggle between Communists and Nationalists; *Shanghai Triad* sympathizes with a singer whose life is owned by an underworld magnate in pre-revolutionary Shanghai. And *Keep Cool* (*Youhua haohao shuo*) (1996) empathizes with losers in love and career in the commercialized Beijing of the 1990s.

It is no surprise that some of Zhang's films are still banned in China. Equipped with the theory of socialist realism, some Chinese critics denounced his work for being "untrue to history." Although their real criticisms were leveled at Zhang's unorthodox treatment

of humanity rather than his untruthful reflections of history, those critics' historical observations were quite accurate: no matter how many concubines a feudal lord possessed, he would never put up red lanterns to announce which one he favored on any particular night. Red lanterns were raised only when he was honored by the emperor as a moral paragon. What Zhang Yimou attempts to glorify is not orthodox history, and certainly not official paragons, but humanity caught in history. If his films are historically untrue, they are nevertheless universally true, because in them we find the same pathos as in, say, *Oedipus Rex*, *Ghosts*, and *Desire Under the Elms*. In the following interview, Zhang Yimou refuses to be categorized into any school, but he does admit that his style is characteristic of the Northern Chinese. "I love the strong and the trenchant," he explains. The strong and the trenchant, meaning the color red in his films.

TAN YE: *Your early films rebelled in both form and content; is it true that your rebellion was mainly against three things: hypocritical political preaching, the mediocrity of the contemporary films, and traditional culture?*
ZHANG YIMOU: This was not very clear. To be honest with you, we artists do not contemplate that many theoretical issues. When we started making films more than ten years ago, we definitely wanted to rebel. Defiance against the older generation is born with the younger generation. The same youthful defiance exists in other walks of life too. This is also true with the Sixth Generation's rebellion.[1] It is not clear whether the rebellion is against politics, or art forms, or art content, or older generations, or traditional aesthetics. In art, creative impulse plays a bigger role than theory. As for rebellion, frankly, I did not have a theoretical target.

Among all the Fifth Generation directors, you are the least didactic. Chen Kaige[2] and Tian Zhuangzhuang[3] are relatively more philosophical.
This is because I have my own understanding of the nature of film. I think film originated from various folk performances. It should be very common and popular. I don't think a film should carry too much theory. After all, it is not philosophy or a concept to be taught in a classroom.

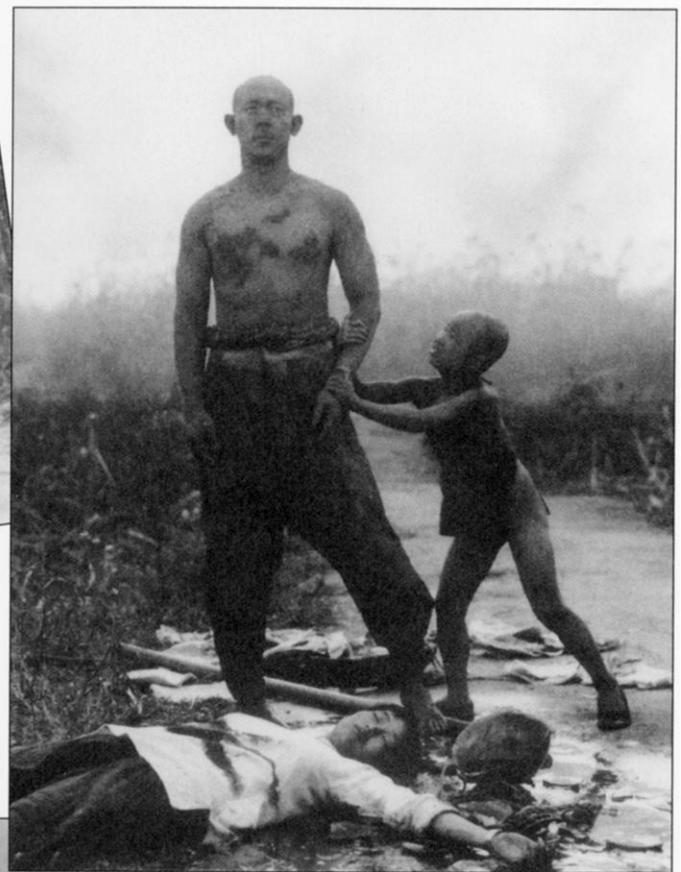
Although, when making *Yellow Earth* as a cameraman, I had to help Kaige realise his subject, when making *Red Sorghum* by myself, I preferred to make it more appealing to the senses. I tend to believe that films are about emotions. An artist's ideas should be understood naturally through emotions. I think the subject matter of a film should be simple. Only after it is simplified, after the thoughts are simplified, can the capacity and power of emotions [of a film] be strengthened. If the subject matter and thoughts are too complicated, emotions will definitely be weakened. It would be like writing an essay with abstract symbols. It is a different kind of film. There are films like that, but I do not like them. Kaige prefers more thoughtful themes. I prefer common folks' tastes, emotional themes. This difference may have something to do with our personalities.

Your cinematography contributed a great deal to the achievement of Yellow Earth. . . .
In making a film, none of the crew can be left out. I understand Chen Kaige's style. We are friends and know each other well. I know that he wants to reveal his heartfelt philosophy. You can treat *Yellow Earth* as a nonrealistic film, an auteur film. If I know that the director wants to make an auteur film, I will surely express his ideas accordingly with my camera.

You often use extreme shots. You said, when making One and Eight *(*Yige he bage*)[4], that you would never repeat shots used previously by other cameramen. You very consciously applied technique to artistic creation. Isn't that also a kind of rebellion?*
That kind of rebellion had its contemporary target, but would not last forever. That was when the Gang of Four[5] was just overthrown. Chinese films were very rigid; they could not escape from the shadow of previous taboos. Therefore, in such simple matters as the form of filmic expression and how to make a film, there were often very doctrinal and rigid ideas, which we thought were outdated and stupid. So *One and Eight* was a rebellion against such stupidity, against affectation, pretense, and artificiality. But that kind of rebellion directed toward a specific phenomenon is rarely seen in China today. Rebellion is no longer a purpose, but a story or a theme.

We look for an appropriate way to tell a story according to its subject matter. In other words, what happens in China now is not a purposeful rebellion targeted to a specific form. Actually, *One and Eight* is not that philosophically profound, its narrative not that original, and its characterization not that outstanding. It was a simple rebellion in filmic form.

When Chen Kaige was adapting Ming ruo qinxian[6] *for his film* Life on a String, *I felt that his philosophy overshadowed his story. He seemed to realize it afterwards with* Farewell My Concubine. *But* Temptress Moon . . . ?



Red Sorghum (clockwise from top left): Gong Li; the aftermath of battle; bride in sedan chair carried to her wedding

To Live (clockwise from top left): gambling stresses the marriage of Fugui (Ge You) and Jiazhen (Gong Li); Jiazhen returns home with her children; silent suffering (Gong Li)

We all love *Farewell My Concubine*. When making *Temptress Moon*, Kaige was interviewed by a journalist and he said that *Temptress Moon* would be even better. I, however, feel that *Temptress Moon* went back to his old stubborn way. I am not sure about the quality of his new film, *The First Emperor* (*Jin Ke ci Qin*). Maybe this is what makes Kaige; this is his own filmic world.

After all these changes, is the Fifth Generation still a unified group.
No, not anymore.

Historically, what was the achievement of the Fifth Generation? Was it mainly a breakthrough?
I think so. From a pragmatic perspective, this breakthrough attracted the attention of audiences. From an aesthetic or pure filmic perspective, our achievement was also a breakthrough. We can now regard it as the snow of yesteryear—now that we can watch foreign films everywhere (including thousands of pirated tapes). But in those years, in the 1980s, information did not travel as fast; therefore, in general, the Chinese were quite closed-minded then. That presented a historical possibility. If the same thing happened in present-day China, the impact of the breakthrough would not be easily felt. If a good film came out yesterday, by today everybody has seen it. Can you surpass this?

Compared with foreign films, what do you think of Chinese films nowadays?
I think Chinese filmmakers have to work hard, otherwise, we will lag behind. The time of the glorious rise of Chinese films is over. Especially in the 1990s, Asian films are becoming very strong. Films made in Iran, Japan, and Korea are quite good. I like Iranian films particularly. We should also include films made in Hong Kong and Taiwan. In the past we looked down on Taiwan films. Now the situation is totally different. Ang Lee and John Woo are making films in Hollywood. Wong Kar Wai's films also have good artistic merits.

No matter what, directors in Mainland China cannot brag anymore; we cannot say with confidence that we are representative of Asian cinema or Oriental cinema. Also, the whole world is moving very fast and making films in China is becoming very difficult. For instance, the Sixth Generation cannot catch up, they do not have any outstanding work. Furthermore, the political and economic conditions in China have worsened. So, all Chinese directors, old and young, have to work hard. If we don't, all the glory will be gone with the past. Our time will be over. Certainly, there will be occasional good works, but we will not be talked about, we will not be the focus of attention.

Granted that you now have to consider the market as well as art, you still present something original in each new film. Is it true that, after the completion of each film, you always want to revitalize yourself with a new style in the next film?
It is probably true. Among the Fifth Generation my style is the most changeable. My films are totally unrelated. They run in all directions. They lack a consistent style. Kaige is more consistent; he searches for the stately and philosophical; his shots are contrived for enduring strength. Relatively speaking, Zhuangzhuang's ideas are vague. I myself tend to experiment with all kinds of things. Sometimes the sheer change of style will excite me.

All these changes have made your personal style rather obscure. For this reason, some foreign critics find it hard to trace your style; possibly some domestic critics feel the same?
It is hard to fit me into a standardized pattern indeed. Maybe two of my films will fit a certain pattern, but the third does not. Critics in China feel the same. They said that my *Keep Cool* perplexed them. None of them could figure it out. *Keep Cool* is perhaps the most talked-about film in China, with all kinds of opinions. Actually I love this. I like to stir up the pond. To me, the excitement of stirring up the water is greater than that of receiving the audiences' praises.

Some people said that you could not film urban life. Is Keep Cool *an answer to them?*
Not necessarily. There has been talk about my inability to make a film about urban life for years. With this film I only wanted to contradict myself, to extend my flexibility. It is a challenge to change from the country to the city, from epic and august styles to playful, relaxed, and MTV styles. I am planning to make a film about city life, one about country life, and one about history. If I make another film about city life, it will definitely be different from *Keep Cool*.

Keep Cool sold extremely well at home, but not so internationally. Of course, the promotional strategy was not efficient. It did not sell as well as my previous films, and the international reviews were not so favorable. For sure, there has been some noise domestically too. This was definitely a risk, I realized this when many foreign film companies came to see the film. It is like selling cloisonné: for many years, ten carts full of cloisonné had a market guaranteed for ten cart loads. If you suddenly replace cloisonné with lacquer tea cups, the

merchants dare not buy them. "OK, leave them here for the moment." Thus, a deal cannot be reached. In many countries, the audience never had a chance to see this film, because the merchants never bought it. "Since this is a film made by Zhang Yimou," a foreign merchant would think, "I should not offer a low price because I do not want to be disrespectful. But if you want me to pay the same price as for his previous films, I dare not, because this is not the type I am used to. I am unsure of the market."

This time it was very bad. Many of the merchants who previously bought many of my films were dubious after the screening. It is definitely risky—the more you appear unpredictable, the more problematic you become to market. Nevertheless, film critics are happy about it because it provides them with a new topic. I am willing to run such risks. If there are people who are willing to fund me, and I do not have to worry too much about money, why shouldn't I take the opportunity?

You said that you chose Qu Ying[7] because of her modernity. Are you becoming more modernized?
Not necessarily, I chose her because her image matched the story.

In general, what do you think of Chinese actors?
Uneven. There are good ones, but most of them are unqualified.

Reading your notes about cinematography for Yellow Earth, *one can tell you like traditional arts, especially traditional Chinese paintings.*
Yes, I love painting. I also love traditional theory on painting, but I have not accomplished much in painting. In Italy [the summer of 1997, when Zhang was directing the opera *Turandot*] we borrowed a great deal from Chinese classical aesthetics and principles on painting. We turned theory into reality.

*It seems you prefer the bold and expressionistic school [*xieyi*] to the delicate and detailed one [*gongbi*]?*
That's right. I am no good with delicate substance. So my films, including *Keep Cool*, may have different styles and emotions, but toward the end of my life, when I have finished filmmaking, all my hundreds of changes can be unified as characteristic of a Northern Chinese. That is, I love the strong and the trenchant. *Keep Cool* is very strong. If its second half could have been done my way, I could have made this film much better. Unfortunately, we were not allowed to do that. Originally, *Keep Cool* was divided into two parts. It was like driving a car from the east, then reversing to the west. You are first made to believe it was cheerful, foolish horseplay, but after the turn, the heroine disappears and towards the end it becomes black humor. The story could have been very interesting, but there was no way we could do it freely. Even the present version was almost censored.

My next film is entitled *Going to Beijing Immediately* (*Mashang jin Beijing*). I am not sure whether I can get it made. I intend it to be a Chinese highway film where all shots show movements. Many of them are on trains, buses, and taxis. At this stage, I am still trying to find the best way to do it. I think this film should have many meanings. Unlike foreigners, Chinese people don't drive a car on a highway. Even though I drive a jeep, the majority of the Chinese are definitely unable to do so. Therefore, I want to catch glimpses of Chinese people's lives. It is a certain kind of visual language that I hope to apply to filmmaking. It should not be mere decoration. Before every film, I try seriously to grasp such a visual language. Unless I have found it, I cannot make a film.

As He Saifei[8] mentioned, you work not only conscientiously but also collectively. Very often you invite opinions from your crew.
This can be said as one of my merits. If there is anything I cannot handle, I will invite people to chat with me. Only during the discussions can I find inspiration. It has become a habit of mine.

Apart from learning through practice and watching films made by others, do you have time to improve yourself through other means?
It is not that I am too busy to do anything else. I saw a ballet the day before yesterday. And I am always reading. All kinds of books, even trashy books, magazines, and papers. I read whatever I can lay my hands on, mostly novels. I subscribe to more than thirty magazines. All of them are fiction; I rarely read theory.

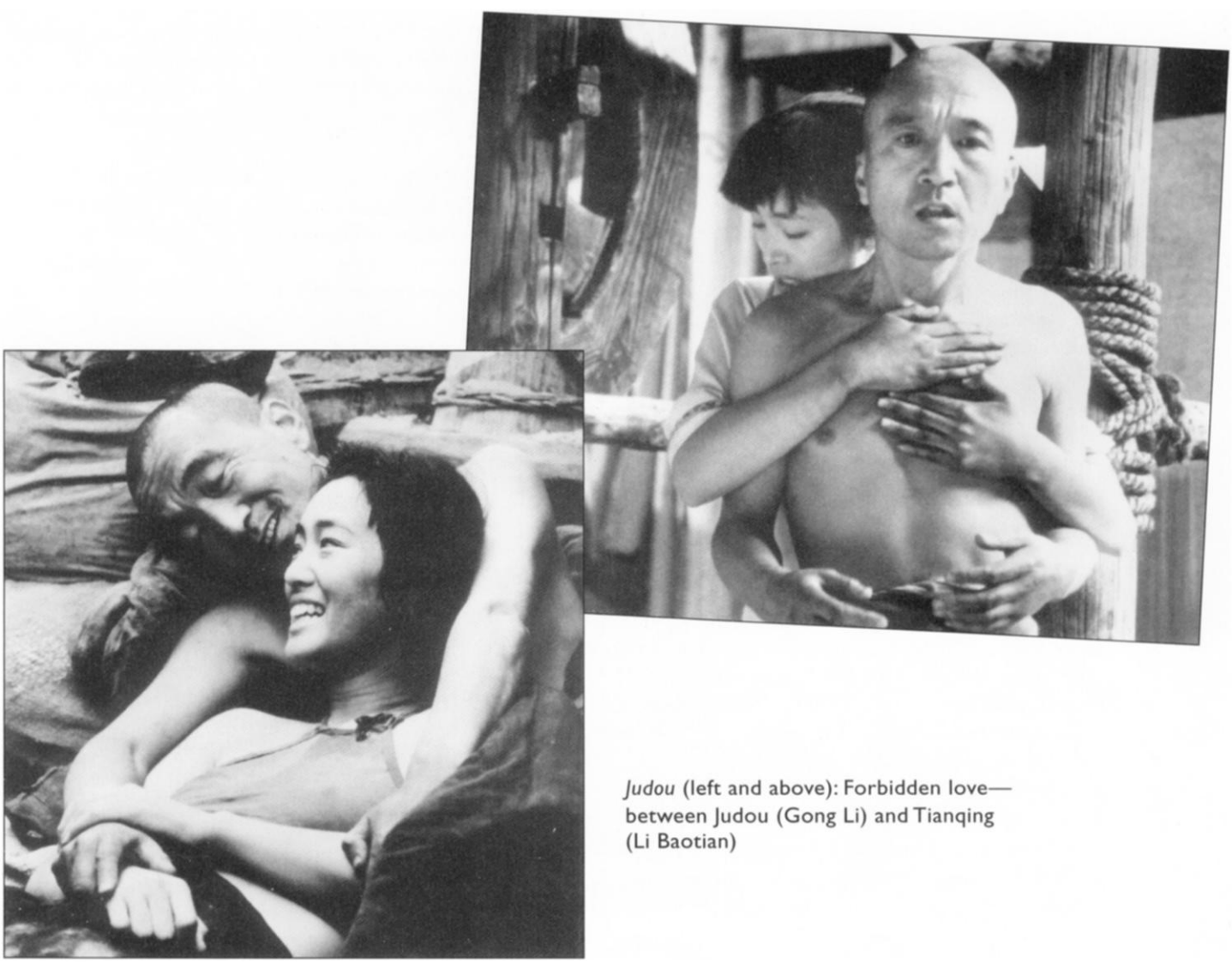
You said that freshness in your work excites you. Your Judou *and* Raise the Red Lantern *were fresh to many people, particularly to Westerners. For this reason some Chinese critics said that you were creating "Orientalism" to please foreigners. Also, in your first films, the leading roles were mainly female; some other critics thus said you were a "feminist," but I don't think that was accurate either, because traditionally in Chinese theater, female characters have more appeal to the audience.*
Right. It was neither Orientalism nor feminism. All that was not deliberately designed. There is a lot of speculation in the West. When I was interviewed there, from their questions I could tell they had many preconcep-

tions. I did not bother explaining. Film by nature is for society. I do not care how you perceive my films. But really I was not deliberately making up anything ideological; I did what my creative urge and my passion prompted me to do.

A film scholar has said Judou *was about incest, but Judou does not have an affair with Tianqing until after she realizes that he has no blood relation with Jinshan.*

To put it simply, we did not intend to tell a story about incest. The original novel was about incest; Tianqing was Jinshan's biological nephew. Since we did not want to deal with incest, we changed Tianqing's role to that of an adopted nephew. The reason was that incest was not the theme of my work. As a matter of fact, I treat *Judou* as the antithesis of *Red Sorghum*. *Red Sorghum* is about unaffected and unrestrained humanity: there are no rules, no imperial laws. *Judou* is about the opposite side of Chinese humanity, which is oppressed by rules and imperial laws. It is about distortion and persecution. In other words, the hero in *Red Sorghum* has both the desire and the courage of a bandit, and the courage is stronger than the desire. The hero in *Judou* has the desire of a bandit but no courage. Even if he has done something gutsy, he still lives in fear. He feels like an underdog. In fact, one film is about freedom and courage, the other about humiliation and oppression. I believe that these two are the best of my works, which reveal both sides of the Chinese. So, absolutely, it is neither incest nor classical Greek tragedy.

The classical Greek tragedy uses incest to preach about moral taboos. We do not want to present this simplified morality. We want to discuss the complemen-



Judou (left and above): Forbidden love—between Judou (Gong Li) and Tianqing (Li Baotian)

tary sides of Chinese culture. We often say that had Yang Tianqing had My Grandpa's[9] temperament, he would have burned the dye mill a long time ago, killed that old man, and eloped with the man's wife. But his temperament is not like that; therefore, under pressure he acts furtively and humbly, hiding his real intention under an innocent front. If you exchange the dispositions of the male leads in these two films, you can see my point more easily. What I did in both films was characterization.

We talked about the simple primitive power of Yellow Earth. *This and all other Fifth Generation films have been overly interpreted.* Raise the Red Lantern, *for instance, has been treated as an allegory of the Gang of Four.*
Some people's interpretations of our works overshadow the works themselves. It has been common for interpretations to impose themselves on art works.

Theory seems to have little influence on you, although when Li Tuo[10] and his comrades began talking about the reforming of Chinese film language, you did read some theory, correct?
Correct. But that was a short period lasting between six months and a year. Only during that period did we read seriously, Nietzsche and so on. That was it. It was very trendy in China then. To my knowledge, no Chinese director reads philosophy anymore. Philosophy is no more a part of our conversational topics.

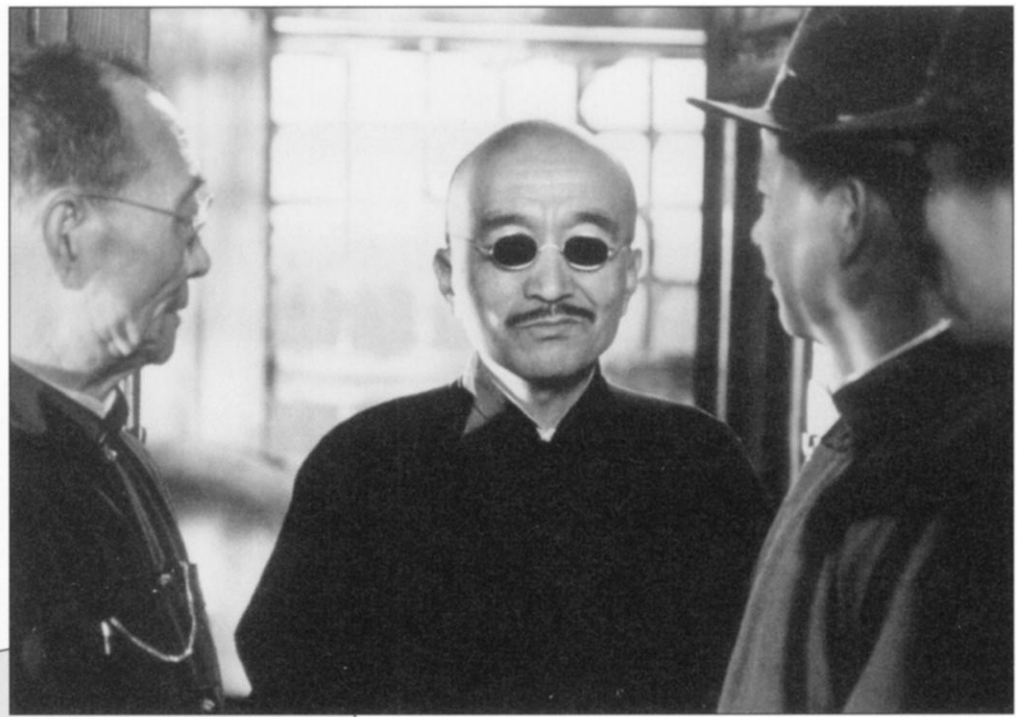
Another issue is history. The biggest difference between Kaige and me is that I do not necessarily like historical themes, of which Kaige is fond. He is conversant with classical Chinese literature and fond of history. To me, history and the present are the same. The reason that I make more films about history is that historical themes are less censored. Although a strict system of censorship has existed in China for many years, there is some leeway in historic themes.

Even during the first years of the Fifth Generation, when filmic forms were considered the most important, many of your films were adaptations from literary works. What do you think of modern Chinese literature?
Literature today is not very good, worse than that of more than ten years ago. Literary circles will surely disagree with me, yet I'm convinced of this. Because not only has the subject matter changed, but also the writers' egos have expanded. To put it bluntly, I find today's literature boring, without appeal. I am not saying that literature has to teach morals or connote some historical significance or responsibility. Ten years ago, when a new literature had just come into being, no matter what the subject, no matter if it was "root-search" [*xungen*] literature or "scar" [*shanghen*] literature, it was very powerful [the former searched in traditional culture for the reasons for the abnormality of the Cultural Revolution; the latter depicted the scars left on people's hearts by the revolution]. Today's literature is as boring as those city people who live under the influence of materialistic desire and money worship. Sometimes literature becomes the property of a small circle. The more boring it is, the more it is considered by some people as pure literature. With such petty self-pity, literature becomes more and more maudlin, divorcing itself from the people and the interests of the broad audience, and becoming something treasured by a small circle.

Today's China is unlike the West, which is post-industrial and postmodern. People in the West are really lonely and disappointed. Their loneliness and disappointment I feel is from their hearts. Today's China is boiling everywhere. No matter whether it is to gain power or to make money or merely to survive, the whole country is boiling, stirring, and agitating. A big blowup, a dramatic change, even a volcanic eruption may take place. No matter whether the change is for the better or for the worse, it is unlike that in Western society. Therefore, there's not much market for modern Western plays and performance art in China. What we see in Chinese literature is only self-promotion and the attempt to be fashionable. In today's China we see naked desire and craving everywhere. I am not judging this morally, what I am saying is that society is filled with instability and demands. A country of 1.3 billion people is now like this. Such a situation should excite literature and make it captivating, but it does not.

But the situation for film is the opposite of literature. Because of the stern, extremely stern system of censorship that has been renewed many times, film has no room to breathe. Literature has much less restriction. With such freedom, if writers cannot turn out good works, it is the problem of the writers. If we were given just a little freedom, if the control was loosened just a little, we could make much better films than the current ones. *Keep Cool* would have been a much better film had we been allowed to express what had been intended. Under the current system it became a farcical facade without any essence.

Is it true that for the celebration of the 100th anniversary of the world cinema and the 90th anniversary of



Shanghai Triad: (left) Shun Chun as Song with Gong Li as Xiao Jingbao; (above) Li Baotian as the Godfather

the Chinese cinema, none of the Fifth Generation directors were invited?
None of us were allowed to show up at the celebration. We are considered not as representatives of the Chinese cinema but as suspicious characters.

What do you make of this kind of mentality?
All this is temporary. This kind of political restriction will be removed sooner or later. In the long run I am optimistic. In ten, twenty, or thirty years, this kind of political, ideological restraint will be removed with the changes in society.

But an artist does not have so many years to wait.
That's really true. That is the misfortune for us.

People like you and Chen Kaige, who are well-known internationally, should be considered fortunate. It will be harder for the artists who are still unknown. Have you seen Lu Xuechang's To Grow Up *(*Zhangda chengren*)?*

Not bad, but it lacks any youthful and explosive impact. If it is to be the debut or the ground-breaking work for the entire Sixth Generation, *To Grow Up* falls short of the energy needed for a ground-breaking work.

Looking back now at *Red Sorghum* or *Yellow Earth*, they both have warm blood and life, which are missing in the works of the Sixth Generation. I think this is because the Sixth Generation was subject to practical considerations. It cannot be resisted: the need for money, the dilemma caused by censorship, and the awards at international film festivals. At a very early stage, the young people of the Sixth Generation knew much more and saw things more clearly than we did. Their aesthetics is much more expanded, as if there were a whole lot of different standards and contrasts. I think this is bad at a time of ground-breaking.

Maybe they are having a more difficult time than you did because when you were coming out, there were few good Chinese films; no big directors were there to block your way. Also, when you started making films, the studios were funded by the government; you could experiment as much as you wanted without worrying about the box office. They do not have such an advantage.

You cannot compare different historical periods. I do not think those objective conditions and circumstantial elements should be fundamental obstacles. I still believe a person's will can triumph over objective obstacles. I am a pagan who believes in human efforts. In my opinion there are more opportunities in today's China than ever before.

Including filmmaking?

Yes, because, first of all, international society has talked about the Fifth Generation for more than ten years. They are sick of talking about it and are looking for the appearance of the Sixth Generation. Many foreigners who study Chinese films are eager—with an almost excessive enthusiasm—to help the Sixth Generation grow. Time and again they come to Beijing when a Sixth Generation film is still unfinished and watch the editing. They recommend the film to international festivals even before the film is finalized. Such enthusiasm and attention were not available to us. In addition, to tell you the truth, it is not really difficult to find money in China today. It is much easier than finding money for film in the West. Some young people can casually develop a plan, get several friends and begin to shoot. The Chinese media are the most interesting. They pay special attention to the novices. As a matter of fact, the domestic media have been more negative than positive to Kaige and to me for the last few years.

Since the appearance of the Fifth Generation, haven't domestic critiques always been more negative than international ones?

The excessive coverage of the Fifth Generation has brought about the current negative opinion. A critic would say, "The endless talking about you has become so boring that I will make it a point to talk about somebody else." I don't think that the Sixth Generation has more difficulties. We are all under the same sky. If I did not accomplish anything more than ten years ago, I would blame no other person but myself for lack of will, a will to succeed regardless of any obstacles.

Of course there is censorship. It was also very stern when we started. "Chairman Mao" and "the Communist Party" were still sung as "mainstream melody"[11] in *Yellow Earth*. Still, the film struggled and succeeded in presenting something of our own. That was what I meant by "strength." That kind of strength can be generated. Even though one is restricted by politics, under the political umbrella, one can still bring out something fresh and powerful. What the current new generation lacks is strength, this kind of power. Therefore, under the same sky they cannot create anything substantial, even with certain compromises.

Is it because they have not experienced the Cultural Revolution?

It may have something to do with that, but we cannot generalize. Maybe those younger than the Sixth Generation will be more powerful. I am not sure.

Are you suggesting that the Sixth Generation is not very talented?

Not necessarily. Judging by their works, I should say that they are quite talented. What they lack is will. In the last analysis, our first films were not necessarily the result of talent. I now firmly believe that, no matter what you pursue, will is needed—a strength from the bottom of your heart. Deliberate calculation is no good. Some Sixth Generation directors I know are too smart. They understand too many things; they are so well-informed about the outside world and so familiar with the path to success that their filmmaking becomes an unemotional process. For instance, when they make underground films, at a very early stage, when the films are still being edited, they have already contacted foreign embassies and secured the channels to export the films.

When Kaige and I were making *Yellow Earth*, he knew little about the outside world, but he had an urge to talk about culture and history. At that time I knew this film would be outstanding. People say that it was because of the cinematography. No matter what, the director's intention was expressed, a very ardent intention. His emotions were expressed in a work that was supposed to serve contemporary politics. That to me is the most crucial. Now I judge a film not by how much

philosophy it contains. The more philosophy it contains, the more I dislike it. I now revert to the most basic elements. When watching a film, I don't just watch how skillfully the story is told or whether the actors perform well; I look for the director's inner world, whether his emotions are strong, and what he tries to say. In his film we can discern his emotions, which, whether expressed in a tragedy or a comedy, will move the audience. That is what I call strength.

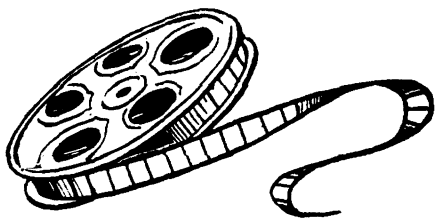
You cannot experiment for the rest of your life. Are you heading in one fixed direction?

I don't want to finalize my style too soon. But I think one cannot escape oneself, no matter how many changes one makes. This may be a rule, but I do not want to settle down too soon, nor do I want to deliberately formalize myself. I just want to do something new. If my current film does not differ from the previous one, I will feel bored from the beginning to the end. Freshness is the necessity of creation itself; I do not think too much about the rest.

Tan Ye is Associate Professor of Chinese Theater at the University of South Carolina and a Visiting Scholar at Beijing Film Academy. He is the author of *Common Dramatic Codes*, and is completing another book, *Chinese Cinema: The Fifth Generation*.

Notes

1. The division of Chinese film directors has never been agreed upon, but the following is adopted by the majority: The First Generation (1905–1937) starts from the silent films and ends at the beginning of the War of Resistance against Japan; The Second Generation (1937–1949) covers the War of Resistance against Japan and the Civil War; The Third Generation (1949–1978) starts from the Communist takeover of Mainland China till two years after the death of Mao Zedong; The Fourth Generation (1978–1983) starts after the death of Mao and ends shortly after the Fifth Generation's graduation from Beijing Film Academy; The Fifth Generation (1983–1989) starts at their first film, *One and Eight*, and ends at the Tiananmen Square incident; The Sixth Generation (1989–present) is the new generation of the post-Tiananmen era.
2. Fifth Generation director, whose major works include *Yellow Earth* (*Huangtudi*), *Big Parade* (*Dayuebing*), *King of Children* (*Haizi wang*), *Life on a String* (*Ming ruo qinxian*), *Farewell My Concubine* (*Bawang bie ji*), *Temptress Moon* (*Fengyue*), and *The First Emperor* (*Ci Qin*).
3. Fifth Generation director, whose major works include *On the Hunting Ground* (*Liechang zhasa*), *Horse Thief* (*Daomazei*), *Rock 'n' Roll Youth* (*Yaogun qingnian*), and *Blue Kite* (*Lan fengzheng*). Tian Zhuangzhuang is a strong supporter of the Sixth Generation. After he was forbidden to make films, Tian became the producer for *To Grow Up* (*Zhangda chengren*), which is an important landmark of the Sixth Generation films.
4. With Zhang Junzhao as the director and Zhang Yimou the cinematographer, *One and Eight* is the first noticable Fifth Generation film.
5. Jiang Qing, Zhang Chunqiao, Yao Wenyuan, and Wang Hongwen, the four Communist leaders considered responsible for the disastrous Cultural Revolution.
6. Written by Shi Tiesheng, *Ming ruo qinxian*, is a philosophical story and Chen Kaige further philosophizes it in *Life on a String*.
7. Qu Ying: the female lead in *Keep Cool*.
8. He Saifei: trained as a traditional Chinese opera singer, He Saifei played the third concubine in *Raise the Red Lantern*.
9. My Grandpa: the hero in *Red Sorghum*.
10. Li Tuo: a Chinese film critic who, in 1979, with his wife Zhang Nuanxin, a Fourth Generation director, published *The Modernization of Film Language*, which triggered a nationwide debate on how to rejuvenate Chinese film.
11. "Mainstream melody": a catchy term invented by the Chinese Ministry of Propaganda to resist "politically incorrect" art works.



Joan Hawkins

Sleaze Mania, Euro-trash,

The Place of European Art Films in American Low Culture

and High Art

Open the pages of any U.S. horror fanzine—*Outré*, *Fangoria*, *Cinefantastique*—and you will find listings for mail order video companies which cater to afficionados of what Jeffrey Sconce has called "paracinema" and trash aesthetics.[1] Not only do these mail order companies represent one of the fastest-growing segments of the video market,[2] their catalogues challenge many of our continuing assumptions about the binary opposition of prestige cinema (European art and avant-garde/experimental films) and popular culture.[3] Certainly, they highlight an aspect of art cinema which is generally overlooked or repressed in cultural analysis, namely, the degree to which high culture trades on the same images, tropes, and themes which characterize low culture.

In the world of horror and cult film fanzines and mail order catalogues, what Carol J. Clover calls "the high end" of the horror genre[4] mingles indiscriminately with the "low end." Here, Murnau's *Nosferatu* (1921) and Dreyer's *Vampyr* (1931) appear alongside such drive-in favorites as *Tower of Screaming Virgins* (1971) and *Jail Bait* (1955). Even more interesting, European art films which have little to do with horror—Antonioni's *L'avventura* (1960), for example—are listed alongside movies which Video Vamp labels "Eurociné-trash." European art films are not easily located through separate catalogue subheadings or listings. Many catalogues simply list film titles alphabetically, making no attempt to differentiate among genres or subgenres, high or low art. In *Luminous Film and Video Wurks Catalogue 2.0*, for example, Jean-Luc Godard's edgy *Weekend* (1968) is sandwiched between *The Washing Machine* (1993) and *The Werewolf and the Yeti* (1975). Sinister Cinema's 1996–97 catalogue, which organizes titles chronologically, lists Godard's *Alphaville* (1965) between *Lightning Bolt* (1965) and *Zontar, the Thing from Venus* (1966).[5]

Where separate genre and subgenre headings are given, the only labels which apply are the labels important to the fans who purchase tapes. European art and experimental film titles are woven throughout catalogue listings, and may be found under the headings

From top: *Nosferatu*; *L'Avventura*; *Weekend*

"Science Fiction," "Horror," "Barbara Steele," "Christopher Lee," "Exploitation," "Weird Westerns," and "Juvenile Schlock."[6] Where art films are bracketed off, they are often described in terms that most film historians would take pains to avoid. Instead of presenting Pier Paolo Pasolini's *Salò* (1975) as a work which explicitly links "fascism and sadism, sexual licence [sic] and oppression,"[7] as the *Encyclopedia of European Cinema* does, Mondo simply notes that the film "left audiences gagging."[8]

The operative criteria here is affect; the ability of a film to thrill, frighten, gross out, arouse, or otherwise directly engage the spectator's body. And it is this emphasis on affect which characterizes paracinema as a low cinematic culture. Paracinema catalogues are dominated by what Clover terms "body genre" films, films which, Linda Williams notes, "privilege the sensational."[9] Most of the titles are horror, porn,[10] exploitation, horrific sci-fi, or thrillers; and other, non-body genre films—art films, Nixon's infamous Checkers speech, sword-and-sandal epics, etc.—tend to be collapsed into categories dictated by the body genres which are the main focus. Part of this strategy is economic. Consumers in search of a particular title or type of film have to literally read most of a catalogue in order to find everything that might be of interest. But the design of the catalogues also enforces a valorization of low genres and low generic categories.

Williams identifies three pertinent features shared by body genres (which she defines as porn, horror, and melodrama). "First," she writes, "there is the spectacle of a body caught in the grips of intense sensation or emotion" (142): the spectacle of orgasm in porn; of terror and violence in horror; of weeping in melodrama. Second, there is the related focus on ecstasy, "a direct or indirect sexual excitement and rapture," which borders on what the Greeks termed insanity or bewilderment (142–3). Visually this is signalled in films through what Williams calls the "involuntary convulsion or spasm—of the body 'beside itself' in the grips of sexual pleasure, fear and terror, and overpowering sadness" (143). Aurally, ecstasy is marked by the inarticulate cry—of pleasure in porn, of terror in horror, and of grief or anguish in melodrama (143).

Finally, body genres directly address the spectator's body. And it is this last feature which, Williams argues, most noticeably characterizes body genres as degraded cultural forms. "What seems to bracket these particular genres from others," she writes, "is an apparent lack of proper aesthetic distance, a sense of overinvolvement in sensation and emotion . . . viewers feel too directly, too viscerally, manipulated by the text" (144). The body of the spectator involuntarily mimics "the emotion or sensation of the body onscreen" (143). The spectator cringes, becomes tense, screams, weeps, becomes aroused. This is such a pointed and calculated feature of body films that Mary Ann Doane, as Williams points out, "equates the violence of this emotion to a kind of 'textual rape' of the targeted . . . viewer" (144).[11]

While Williams' assessment of the way body genres work—particularly the way they work in "specifically gendered ways" (144)—is excellent, the distinction between high and low, properly distanced and improperly involved audience response is not as neat as Williams suggests. Consider, for example, Amos Vogel's description of *The War Game* (Peter Watkins, 1965), a British art film which is frequently listed in paracinema catalogues. "A terrifying, fabricated documentary records the horrors of a future atomic war in the most painstaking, sickening detail. Photographed in London, it shows the flash burns and firestorms, the impossibility of defence [sic], the destruction of all life. Produced by the BBC, the film was promptly banned and became world-famous and rarely seen."[12] Similarly, Stan Brakhage's *The Act of Seeing with One's Own Eyes* (1972), which is hard to find outside experimental and avant-garde film venues, encourages an uncomfortably visceral reaction in the spectator. The chronicle of a real autopsy, the film is, Amos Vogel writes, "an appalling, haunting work of great purity and truth. It dispassionately records whatever transpires in front of the lens: bodies sliced length-wise, organs removed, skulls and scalp cut open with electric tools" (267).[13] While such descriptive terms as "haunting work of great purity and truth" are seldom found in paracinema catalogues, *The War Game* and *The Act of Seeing with One's Own Eyes* do address the spectator in ways that paracinema fans would appreciate. Clearly designed to break the audience's aesthetic distance, the films encourage the kind of excessive physical response which we would generally attribute to horror. Furthermore, their excessive visual force and what paracinema catalogues like to term "powerful subject matter" mark them as subversive. Banned, marginalized through being screened exclusively in museums and classrooms, these are films which most mainstream film patrons never see.

Of course *The War Game* and *The Act of Seeing with One's Own Eyes* use sensational material differently than many body genre movies do. Seeking to instruct or challenge the spectator, not simply titillate her, films like Watkins' and Brakhage's are deemed to have a higher cultural purpose, and certainly a different artistic intent, from low-genre blood and gore

fests. That is, high culture—even when it engages the body in the same way that low genres do—supposedly evokes a different kind of spectatorial pleasure/response than the one evoked by low genres.

Supposedly. But that doesn't mean that it always does. Consider the works of the Marquis de Sade, whose books are sold in mainstream bookstores and adult bookstores, and housed in university libraries. De Sade's works, which the intellectual elite views as masterful analyses of the mechanisms of power and economics,[14] are also—at least if we are to take their presence in adult bookstores and magazines seriously—still regarded as sexually arousing, as masturbatory aids. Furthermore, as Jane Gallop's powerful admission that she masturbated while reading de Sade demonstrates, one set of cultural uses—one kind of audience pleasure—doesn't necessarily preclude the other.[15] It is possible for someone to be simultaneously intellectually challenged *and* physically titillated; and it is possible for someone to simultaneously *enjoy* both the intellectual and the physical stimulation.

Finally, it is not so clear that low genres seek *only* to titillate. As Laura Kipnis remarks in her famous article on *Hustler* magazine, low genres, too, can be analyzed for serious content and purpose. Using a vocabulary similar to the one generally used to analyze the powerful cultural critique mounted by the high pornography of pre-Revolutionary France, Kipnis writes that "*Hustler* also offers a theory of sexuality—a 'low theory.' Like [Robin] Morgan's radical feminism, it too offers an explicitly political and counterhegemonic analysis of power and the body." The fact that it does so in a way that middle-class readers—Kipnis included—find disgusting is evidence that "it is explicit about its own class location."[16]

In a similar fashion, low cinematic genres—as Clover, Williams, Robin Wood, and others have pointed out[17]—often handle explosive social material which mainstream cinema is reluctant to touch. Carlos Clarens notes in *An Illustrated History of the Horror Film* that the B thrillers that Roger Corman's studios quickly cranked out depicted—for all their fabulous premises—a resolutely contemporary world, a world "usually ignored by Hollywood or blown up beyond recognition."[18] And Eric Schaefer has demonstrated that, historically, art films which failed to get the Hays Office's coveted seal of approval were screened in bump-and-grind houses, marketed to patrons of body genre pictures as well as to European art film connoisseurs.[19]

As these examples show, the categorical difference between low and high genres, body genres and elite art —both inside and outside the cinematic beltway—is a difficult one to define. Even critics who make it their business to evaluate films on the basis of their artistic worth, intent, and merit sometimes find it hard to distinguish between low and high cinematic elements. Stephen Garrett's annotated article on the Production Code in *Hollywood Handbook*, for example, calls foreign films of the 1960s "erudite skin flicks,"[20] and Amos Vogel links horror, porn, avant-garde, and European art films under one heading: "subversive" cinema.[21]

If the operative criterion in paracinema culture is affect, the most frequently expressed patron desire is to see something "different," something unlike contemporary Hollywood cinema. As A.S. Hamrah and Joshua Glenn put it, "Let's face it: Hollywood films are cautious, uninventive, and bland, and young filmgoers are increasingly uninterested."[22] Paracinema fans, like the cineaste elite, "explicitly situate themselves in opposition to Hollywood cinema" (Sconce, 381); and they do so in a way which academics would recognize as highly sophisticated. As Sconce notes, "the paracinematic audience recognizes Hollywood as an economic and artistic institution that represents not just a body of films, but a particular mode of film production and its accompanying signifying practices. Furthermore, the narrative form produced by this institution is seen as somehow 'manipulative' and 'repressive,' and linked to dominant interests as a form of cultural coercion" (381). Paracinema consumption can be understood, then, as American art cinema consumption has often been understood, as a reaction against the hegemonic and normatizing practices of mainstream, dominant, Hollywood production.

Providing for the demand for affective products and the demand for "something different"—something unlike contemporary Hollywood movies—often takes a company's list in what appears to be wildly different directions. Paracinema catalogues not only list classic films by Godard, Antonioni, and Bergman, they are often the only places where European cinema fans can find video titles which are otherwise not available for sale in the U.S. These include everything from the uncut horror films of Jess Franco to Peter Greenaway's *The Baby of Macon* (1993) to Jean-Luc Godard's historically important *Tout va bien* (1972). If "entertainment is one of the purest marketplaces in the world," as Robert Shayé, Director of New Line Cinema, maintained during the 1993 GATT controversy,[23] then the alternative mail-order video industry is one of the purest (i.e., uncontaminated by any prejudice) entertainment marketplaces around. Certainly, its mail order catalogues encourage a reading strategy much like the one which Fredric Jameson proposes in *Signatures of the*

Tout va bien

Visible. That is, they invite us to "read high and mass culture as objectively related and dialectically interdependent phenomena, as twin and inseparable forms of the fission of aesthetic production under capitalism."[24]

Historically speaking, paracinema catalogues, with their levelling of cultural hierarchies and abolition of binary categories, are reminiscent of an earlier age—an age preceding what Lawrence W. Levine has called the "sacralization" of high art, when the mingling of high and low culture was commonplace.[25] In his book *Highbrow Lowbrow*, Levine describes the historical emergence of a cultural hierarchy in the United States during the late nineteenth century. Prior to that time there was little cultural stratification—be it of cultural products or of audiences. This was a time when opera could exist *simultaneously* as a popular and an elite art form;[26] a time when American audiences might hear a soliloquy from *Hamlet* and a popular song in the course of one evening's entertainment at a local venue. In the early nineteenth century, Levine tells us, no art form—opera, painting, theater—was "elevated above other forms of expressive culture . . . ; they were part of the general culture and were experienced in the midst of a broad range of other cultural genres by a catholic audience that cut through class and social lines. This situation began to change after mid-century" (149).

The change, which Levine calls "the sacralization of culture," involved the establishment of a hierarchy of cultural products and spaces. Shakespeare's works were increasingly played "straight," without the accompaniment of farce (a form of entertainment usually scheduled between acts) or popular music; and gradually they acquired the patina of high art. They were seen as more culturally valuable or sophisticated than the travelling road shows which catered to "popular taste." The emergence of a growing differentiation of cultural products brought with it a nearly simultaneous differentiation of performance space and audience. Since tickets to the opera house, an edifice of high culture, commanded a much higher price than tickets to the music hall, audiences who attended performances at the opera house tended to be a much tonier crew than audiences who attended the newly devalued variety shows. More importantly, however, as certain cultural products picked up elite status, they also acquired a certain restrictive class inflection. Shakespeare not only moved into theaters, he moved off the boards. He was transformed, as Levine tells us, "from a playwright for the general public into one for a specific audience" (56). Shakespeare became high class and highbrow.

The reasons for the sacralization of high culture in the nineteenth century are, as Levine argues, complicated. Then as now, "culture"—as a concept—had politico-economic as well as aesthetic and social resonance, and "aesthetics by themselves cannot account for the nature of the mores and the institutions" that accompanied the historical development of high culture (228). As Levine writes, "these were shaped by the entire [historic] context—social, cultural, and economic—in which that development took place" (228). Certainly, the categorization and stratification of cultural products seems, at this remove at least, to be the logical aesthetic extension of the stratification, compartmentalization, and commodification that accompanied most cultural production during industrialization and the rise of capitalism. And as leisure activity—the freedom to not work or at least to have a wife who did not work for a salary—increasingly became both a signifier of social status and a reason for cultural consumption, it was only natural that the cultural products consumed during leisure time would themselves emerge as important signifiers of social prestige and class standing.

But while Levine stresses the need for a holistic paradigm to explain the cultural shift which occurred in the United States during industrialization, he also emphasizes the degree to which the sacralization of culture served particular partisan political goals. For Levine, cultural stratification was one logical outcome of a conservative political reformation. "It should not really surprise us," he writes,

> that the thrust of the Mugwumps—those independent Republicans whose devotion to the cause of orderly and efficient civil service reform led them to desert their own party in the election of 1884—was not confined to the political sphere. Once we understand that the drive for political order was paralleled by a

drive for cultural order, that the push to organize the economic sphere was paralleled by a push to organize the cultural sphere, that the quest for social authority ("the control of action through the giving of commands") was paralleled by a quest for cultural authority ("the construction of reality through definitions of fact and value"), we can begin to place the cultural dynamics of the turn of the century in clearer perspective (228).

Certainly, we can see the way that the impetus to sacralize specific cultural products, spaces, and historic artifacts as "culture" had the same sociopolitical and economic implications in the nineteenth century that it has today. The recent debates surrounding the educational curriculum (particularly regarding the canon and which books may or may not be considered "literature" by the public schools), the concern over the free circulation of both information and images on the Internet, the disputes over continued funding for the National Endowment for the Arts and the Public Broadcasting Service, and the public lambasting of violent and sexual content in rap music, popular Hollywood cinema, and commercial television by both politicians and intellectuals all demonstrate the degree to which culture, economics, and politics continue to be interrelated terms in a society very much concerned with issues of social control. Now, as in the late nineteenth century, "there is . . . the same sense that culture [in the sacralized sense of the word] is something created by the few for the few, threatened by the many, and imperiled by democracy; the conviction that culture cannot come from the young, the inexperienced, the untutored, the marginal" (252). And it is largely in opposition to this sense that "culture" is exclusionary and elitist that paracinema consumption must be understood. As Michael Weldon notes in the foreword to the *Psychotronic Video Guide*, "unlike other movie guides, nothing is omitted [here] because it's in bad taste. All of this stuff is out there. You should know about it" (vii).

Exploitation companies are not the only places which cater to European art film fans. Other—more upscale—video companies pick up most of the art film business, and while they don't carry some of the truly obscure titles that characterize Mondo or Cinemacabre's lists, they have a broader range of European art selections than the paracinema companies do (and their tapes are usually much better quality). Interestingly, like Mondo, they do attempt to cater to the horror tastes, as well as the art tastes, of their clients. Facets Multimedia, one of the most complete mail-order video services in the country, has listings for cult and horror films, as well as for hard-to-find avant-garde and European art titles. Even Home Film Festival, whose slogan, "the best films you never saw," specifically targets a middle-class art and independent film audience, has begun carrying some horror titles—*Night of the Living Dead* (1968), *Spanish Dracula* (1931),[27] *Eyes Without a Face* (*Les Yeux sans visage*, 1959), *Nadja* (1995), and *Mute Witness* (1995), to name just a few. The fact that "art" companies as well as "sleaze" companies market both high art and low culture titles[28] suggests that the sacralization of performance culture (its division into high and low art) never completely took root among art and horror/sleaze/exploitation film fans.[29]

Night of the Living Dead (top); *Eyes Without a Face* (above)

Of course, upscale mail-order video companies rely on a very different kind of product for the majority of their sales than do companies like Mondo or Video Vamp. In June, 1996, for example, the best-selling foreign title at Facets was *La Jetée* (1964), a title which

La Jetée

was currently popular with film buffs because, as Facet's manager Milos Stehlik claimed, "it was adapted by Terry Gilliam for his 1995 hit *Twelve Monkeys*."[30] Ranked number 2 was *Bread and Chocolate* (1974), an Italian comedy which had been previously unavailable on video. Jean-Luc Godard's *Numéro Deux* (1975), Luis Puenzo's *The Official Story* (1985), and Jean-Jacques Beineix's *Diva* (1981) followed as third, fourth, and fifth in popularity respectively (Nichols, H 29). The tendency here is for patrons to buy more contemporary titles or historical titles of current interest (Fox Lorber's video release of Jacques Démy's *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg*, 1964, for example, which followed the film's re-release in theaters, or *La Jetée*).

These are titles which the horror and exploitation catalogues, for the most part, do not even bother to carry. While the European *horror* film listings in exploitation publications include recent films as well as films of historical interest,[31] the European art films which show up in these catalogues tend to date from the height of the art cinema movement, the period which Susan Sontag elegized in her *New York Times* article, "The Decay of Cinema."[32] The post-1970 auteurs mentioned by Timothy Corrigan, Thomas Elsaesser, and Jill Forbes in their studies of postwar European and postmodern cinema[33] are largely passed over in favor of the "classic" auteurs[34]—Godard, Fellini, Antonioni, Buñuel. The most frequently represented American auteur is Orson Welles. Exploitation catalogues feature, then, art film titles which don't sell well in other venues: films of historical interest or titles which haven't been officially released. In that sense, it's not clear to what degree they actually compete with more upscale specialty video companies. What is clear is that the catalogue companies themselves comprise and address what Dick Hebdige might recognize as a true video subculture,[35] a subculture identified less by a specific style than by a certain strategy of reading.[36]

In addition to art, horror, and science fiction films, "paracinema" catalogues "include entries from such seemingly disparate genres" as badfilm, splatterpunk, mondo films, sword-and-sandal epics, Elvis flicks, government hygiene films, Japanese monster movies, beach party musicals, and "just about every other historical manifestation of expoitation cinema from juvenile delinquency documentaries to . . . pornography" (Sconce, 372). As Sconce explains, this is an "extremely elastic textual category," and comprises "less a distinct group of films than a particular reading protocol, a counter-aesthetic turned subcultural sensibility devoted to all manner of cultural detritus. In short, the explicit manifesto of paracinematic culture is to valorize all forms of cinematic 'trash' whether such films have been either explicitly rejected or simply ignored by legitimate film culture" (372).

This valorization is achieved, he argues, largely through heavily ironized strategies of cinematic reading. Connoisseurs of trash cinema are always on the lookout for movies that are so awful they're good. But they also consume films which are recognized by "legitimate" film culture as masterpieces. And catalogue descriptions do attempt to alert the consumer that such films might require a different reading strategy—less heavily ironized—than other films listed in the catalogue.[37] Sinister Cinema's description of *Vampyr* is a good example: "If you're looking for a fast-paced horror film with lots of action go to another movie in our listings. If you like mood and atmosphere this is probably the greatest horror movie ever made. The use of light, shadow, and camera angles is translated into a pureness of horror seldom equaled, in this chilling vampire-in-a-castle tale. One of the best."[38]

Clearly, the description serves an important economic purpose. Customers are less likely to be disappointed, to return tapes, if they understand clearly what they're getting. But the delineation of important stylistic elements is instructional as well cautionary. It tells the collector what to look for, how to read a film which might seem lugubrious or boring. The fact that the catalogue lists two versions of the film—a longer, foreign-language version and a shorter version with English subtitles—marks the company's economic stake in serious collectors and completionists (people who collect many versions of the same title—the U.S. theatrical release, the director's cut or uncut European version, the rough cut, etc.). But it also gives the catalogue a curiously academic or scholarly air, which links Sinister

Cinema to more upscale "serious" video companies like Facets.

While paracinema catalogues often tag art films as films which require a different reading strategy than *Reefer Madness* (1939) or *Glen and Glenda* (1953), they also tag certain B movies as films which can be openly appreciated on pure aesthetic grounds. In the same catalogue which characterizes *Vampyr* as "one of the best," for example, the reader can also find a listing for *Carnival of Souls* (1962), a B-grade American horror film which *The Encyclopedia of Horror Movies* calls "insufferably portentous." The script, the *Encyclopedia* tells us "harks back to those expressionistic dramas which solemnly debated this life and the next with heavy-breathing dialogue."[39] For Sinister Cinema catalogue patrons, however, the film is described in terms not unlike the ones used to describe *Vampyr*: "A riveting pipe organ music score. Seldom have the elements of sight and sound come together in such a horrifying way. A haunting film that you'll never forget. Original uncut 80-minute version."[40] Although this description does not praise *Carnival of Souls*' use of "light, shadow, and camera angles," its observation that "sight and sound come together in a . . . horrifying way" is a tribute to the film's formal style. And the use of the word "haunting" in the next-to-last line reminds the reader that schlock, too, can be beautiful. Like the Surrealist film critic Ado Kyrou, the writers for paracinema publications continually remind readers that low budget horror can sometimes be "sublime."[41]

Negotiating paracinema catalogues often calls, then, for a more complicated set of textual reading strategies than is commonly assumed. Viewing/reading the films themselves—even the trashiest films—demands a set of sophisticated strategies which, Sconce argues, are remarkably similar to the strategies employed by the cultural elite.

> Paracinematic taste involves a reading strategy that renders the bad into the sublime, the deviant into the defamiliarized and in so doing, calls attention to the aesthetic aberrance and stylistic variety evident but routinely dismissed in the many subgenres of trash cinema. By concentrating on a film's formal bizarreness and stylish eccentricity, the paracinematic audience, *much like the viewer attuned to the innovations of Godard* . . . foregrounds structures of cinematic discourse and artifice so that the material identity of the film ceases to be a structure made invisible in service of the diegesis, but becomes instead the primary focus of textual attention (388, emphasis mine).

Since Sconce is mainly interested in theorizing trash aesthetics, he doesn't take the "high" art aspects of the catalogues' video lists into account. So he does not thoroughly discuss the way in which the companies' listing practices erase the difference between what's considered trash and what's considered art through a deliberate levelling of hierarchies and recasting of categories. But his comments about "the viewer attuned to the innovations of Godard" help to explain the heavy representation of Godard's films in these catalogues. As Godard himself repeatedly demonstrated, there is a very fine line between the reading strategies demanded by trash and the reading strategies demanded by high culture.

Earlier I mentioned that the design of paracinema mail order catalogues—which list titles alphabetically or chronologically, and make no attempt to differentiate between high and low genres—encourages a kind of dialectical cultural reading. Certainly, it highlights an aspect of art cinema generally overlooked or repressed in cultural analysis, namely, the degree to which high culture trades on the same images, tropes, and themes that characterize low culture. "Film is a vivid medium," as Steven Shaviro notes.[42] And there is something vividly scandalous and transgressive about the films of Peter Greenaway, Derek Jarman, Luis Buñuel, Jean-Luc Godard, and the other European filmmakers mentioned above. In fact, European art cinema has followed a trajectory in the United States not unlike that of pure exploitation cinema, in that historically it has been seen as delving "unashamedly into often disreputable content," often "promoting it in . . . [a] disreputable manner."[43]

As Peter Lev notes, *Open City* (1945), "the first foreign-language film to earn more than a million dollars in the United States, is certainly not sexually explicit by contemporary standards. But some observers felt that *Open City*'s success in the United States was based on a salacious advertising campaign."[44] Similarly, throughout the 1960s, the advertisements for Jean-Luc Godard's films tended to feature scantily clad women, images which were, American distributors felt, in keeping with the impression most Americans had of French cinema, as something sexy.[45] And as late as 1972, Pauline Kael felt it necessary to distinguish *Last Tango in Paris*'s eroticism from that of exploitation films and to stress the movie's links to the world of high culture.[46]

While Michael Mayer gives a long list of reasons for the rise in popularity of foreign films in the U.S. after the war—the Paramount decision, which had the effect of decreasing the number of films produced in the U.S., the increased American interest in all things foreign, the end of political isolationism, more travel opportunities, the increased sophistication of the viewing public ("the public no longer requires complete clarity on film")—most interesting for our purposes is the importance he places on the "violent" change in Americans' sexual mores.[47] Certainly, this is the "lesson" which Hollywood learned from the rise of art cinema. As Kristin Thompson and David Bordwell note in *Film History*, "one way of competing with television, which had extremely strict censorship," as well as with European art films, "was to make films with more daring subject matter. As a result, producers and distributors pushed the code further and further."[48]

For many Americans, however, throughout the late 50s and early 60s, European art cinema retained a scandalous reputation which marked its difference from Hollywood cinema (even a Hollywood cinema dedicated to "push[ing] the code further and further"). In 1960, the residents of Fort Lee, New Jersey, protested the opening of a "film art house" in their community. "It is a known fact that many of the foreign films are without doubt detrimental to the morals of the young and old," one pastor maintained. Apparently, the president of the Borough Council, agreed. "I would not hesitate to pass an ordinance barring all future theatres from Fort Lee," he claimed, "if that's the only way to keep this one out."[49] And both Janet Staiger and Douglas Gomery stress the degree to which the audience for art films in the U.S. has always been a "special interest group."[50] Hollywood's need to compete for art film audiences, then, should be seen more as an indication of changing audience demographics (mainstream audiences were going less and less frequently to the movies; special interest groups were going more and more) than as an index of changing mainstream tastes. The moviegoing audience was not only becoming segmented, as Janet Staiger claims,[51] it was becoming polarized (into mainstream and "alternative" or "fringe" audiences). Interestingly, the majority of historical titles on horror and exploitation video mail order lists are drawn from films made during the era when this polarization became pronounced. Agreeing with Richard Kadrey that "everything interesting is out at the edges,"[52] the catalogues celebrate the two extreme tastes of the postwar, youthful filmgoing public: low-budget horror, sci-fi, and exploitation films on the one hand; art-film "classics," on the other.

Open City

In addition to these, there is an interesting array of films which, put quite simply, are difficult to categorize. Films with high production values, European art-film cachet, and enough sex and violence to thrill all but the most jaded horror fan: Roger Vadim's *Blood and Roses* (1960), Stanley Kubrick's *Clockwork Orange* (1971), Harry Kuemel's *Daughters of Darkness* (1971), Georges Franju's *Eyes Without a Face* (1959), Roman Polanski's *Repulsion* (1965) and *The Tenant* (1976), to name just a few. There are films, like Tod Browning's *Freaks* (1932), which began their career as horror or exploitation films and were later revived as art films; films, like Paul Morrissey's *Andy Warhol's Frankenstein* (1973) and *Andy Warhol's Dracula* (1974), which belong to New York avant-garde culture as well as to horror; and experimental films, like the Surrealist classic *Un Chien andalou* (1929), which contain sequences as shocking as those in any contemporary splatter film.[53] These are films which promise *both* affect and "something different"; films which defy the traditional genre labels by which we try to make sense of cinematic history and cultures, films which seem to have a stake in both high and low art.

Unlike *Nosferatu* or *Vampyr*—films which I earlier designated "the high end of horror"—these films still directly engage the viewer's body. Like the slasher films which Clover analyzes, many of them are

Clockwise from right:
Clockwork Orange;
Un Chien andalou;
Repulsion

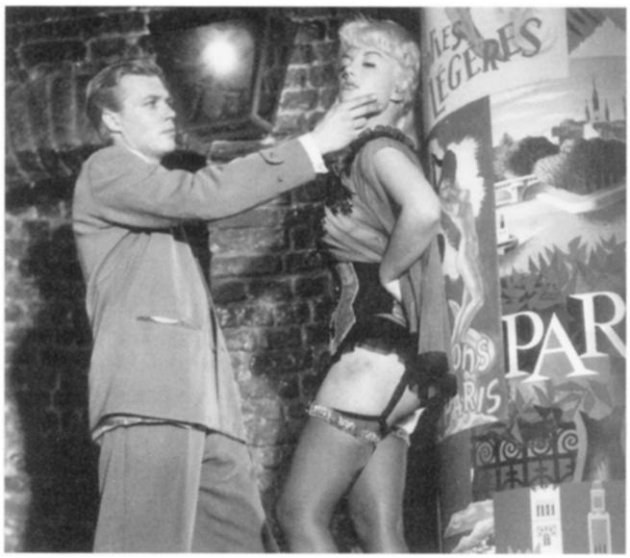
"drenched in taboo" and encroach "vigorously on the pornographic."[54] All of them meet both Linda Williams' and William Paul's criteria for lower cinematic forms. In *Laughing Screaming*, Paul writes:

> From the high perch of an elitist view, the negative definition of the lower works would have it that they are less subtle than higher genres. More positively, it could be said they are more direct. Where lower forms are explicit, higher forms tend to operate more by indirection. Because of this indirection the higher forms are often regarded as being more metaphorical and consequently, more resonant, more open to the exegetical analyses of the academic industry.[55]

This concurs with Williams' characterization of body genres as physically excessive, viscerally manipulative genres. For both Williams and Paul, so-called "low" genres lack "proper aesthetic distance" (Williams, 144). In fact, the title of Paul's book, *Laughing Screaming*, specifically foregrounds the kind of undistanced involuntary response—what Williams might call the ecstatic response—which direct, body-genre films evoke from the audience. As Williams notes, "aurally, excess is marked by recourse not to the coded articulations of language but to inarticulate cries" (143)—laughing, screaming—both onscreen and in the audience.

The films listed above are nothing if not direct. There may be a "metaphorical" significance to the slashing of a woman's eye in *Un Chien andalou*—in fact, feminist film theory would argue that there's a profound metaphorical significance to such an act—but that significance is very much bound up with the immediate physical jolt experienced by the spectator. Similarly, when Dracula vomits blood in *Andy Warhol's Dracula*, when Dr. Génessier peels the skin from a woman's face

Freaks



Peeping Tom

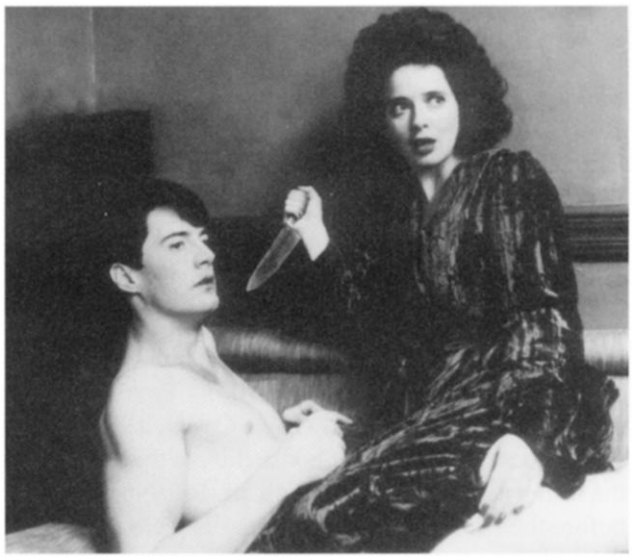
in *Eyes Without a Face*, and when Stephan, in *Daughters of Darkness*, whips his wife in an excess of sadistic sexual frenzy, the directness of the image, as Paul points out, "makes metaphoric significance seem secondary to the primary power" of the image itself (32).

Which is not to say these films don't simultaneously operate at the high end of the horror spectrum. They do. The pacing, the blatant disregard for the cause-effect logic of classical Hollywood cinema, the strategic use of discontinuous editing, the painterly composition of certain scenes all serve to mark these films as art cinema.[56] The fact that the films seem to operate at both ends of the horror spectrum is at least partly responsible for the fact that the best of them were so poorly received at the time of their release. *Daughters of Darkness* was so unsuccessful in finding a generic niche, *The Encylopedia of Horror Movies* notes, that it never received the attention it deserved. This "unsettlingly intelligent" and uncommonly beautiful film was not well received "by any of the established audiences for art cinema, horror or camp movies" (242).

A film which had an even more difficult time staking out its generic territory is Tod Browning's *Freaks* (1932). Initially made as a mainstream horror film at MGM, the film caused a scandal. Described in reviews as "loathsome" and "unwholesome," the film was pulled from mainstream distribution shortly after its initial release and leased to Dwain Esper (the prolific exploitation filmmaker), who showed it, under a variety of titles, on the exploitation circuit. Like *Daughters of Darkness*, however, the film had trouble finding an appropriate audience. Too sensational for mainstream filmgoers, the film simply wasn't sensational enough for many exploitation fans. As David Friedman notes, *Freaks* nearly caused a riot when Dwain Esper showed it to a North Carolina drive-in audience under the sensational title *Forbidden Love*. Led by the title and advertising to expect a softcore treatment of "love" between "a beautiful woman and a midget," the crowd had no patience with a movie which Raymond Durgnat later compared to the European art films of Buñuel.[57] Esper managed to pacify the drive-in patrons by showing them a black-and-white nudist colony one-reeler that he had tucked in the trunk of his car, a film that apparently came much closer to satisfying their expectations than did Browning's creepy classic.[58] Interestingly enough, *Freaks* was revived 30 years later as an "art film" and did very well, attracting favorable reviews by Raymond Durgnat and John Thomas, and captivating such notable patrons as Emile de Antonio and Diane Arbus.[59] By 1967, David J. Skal notes, the film "had made it to the Museum of Modern Art" (21).

Finally, Michael Powell's art-horror masterpiece, *Peeping Tom* (1960), which *The Encylopedia of Horror Movies* calls "one of the best and most disturbing films to be made in Britain," not only shocked audiences, it almost ruined the director's career (135). Known for making films like *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp* (1943), *Black Narcissus* (1947), and *The Red Shoes* (1948), Powell had previously flirted with the sensational in his work, but never so graphically and disturbingly as he did in *Peeping Tom*. The film disgusted reviewers. Derek Hill's now infamous review for the *Tribune* perhaps best sums up the critical response. "The only really satisfactory way to dispose of *Peeping Tom*," Hill writes, "would be to shovel it up and flush it swiftly down the nearest sewer. Even then the stench would remain."[60] Interestingly, the film is now shown in art houses as well as in horror venues, and it is frequently taught—as an example of some of

Road Warrior



Blue Velvet (top); *Blade Runner* (above)

the best of British filmmaking—in university courses treating the history of British cinema.

In a way, hybrid genres like art-horror films simply point up the problems which have historically characterized all attempts at genre definition. As S.S. Prawer notes,

> (i) Every worthwhile work modifies the genre [horror] to some extent, brings something new to it, and therefore forces us to rethink definitions and delimitations.
>
> (ii) There are borderline cases, works that belong to more than one genre—the overlap between the "fantastic terror" film and the "science fiction" film is particularly large.
>
> (iii) Wide variations in quality are possible within a given genre.
>
> iv) There are works which as a whole clearly do not belong to the genre in question but which embody references to that genre, or contain sequences that derive from, allude to, or influence it. The first dream sequence in Bergman's *Wild Strawberries* . . . clearly . . . [belongs] in that category.[61]

While Prawer is speaking here mainly of horror films, his remarks—as he himself points out—can be adapted to fit "genre studies in any medium" (37). Certainly, they can be adapted to fit other film genres. Film noir, the thriller, and melodrama have a great deal of overlap with other genres. Avant-garde cinema is just as divergent in scope and quality as horror cinema. The European art film is so diverse that it is generally not represented as a genre at all. And, as Jim Collins maintains in *Architectures of Excess*, the 80s and 90s have been marked by the increasing number of "eclectic, hybrid genre films": films such as *Road Warrior* (1981), *Blade Runner* (1982), *Blue Velvet* (1986), *Near Dark* (1988), and *Thelma and Louise* (1991), which "engage in specific tranformations across genres."[62] In fact, genre overlap and instability is so common, Robin Wood maintains, that the tendency to treat genres as discrete has been one of the major obstacles to developing what he calls a synthetic definition of the term.[63]

Not only is there slippage between genres, there is slippage between evaluative classifications as well. As Eric Schaefer pointed out to me, if *Dementia* (*Daughter of Horror*, 1955) or *Carnival of Souls* (1962) had been made in Europe they would probably be considered art, or at least art-horror, films, instead of drive-in classics. Similarly, if *Eyes Without a Face* had been made in the United States, it would probably be considered a low-budget horror film. That is, in evaluative

terms, the films would occupy not only a differenct generic niche, they would occupy a different artistic category or "class." The instability of film categorization (as high or low art) in all genres was illustrated when the July–August 1997 issue of *Film Comment* published a list of the top 30 unreleased foreign-language films of the 90s. Drawing upon a poll which queried such film scholars and critics as David Bordwell, Roger Ebert, Jonathan Rosenbaum, and Robert Sklar, Gavin Smith (writing for *Film Comment*) listed *Les Amants du Pont Neuf* (Léos Carax, 1991) as the second-best unreleased art house flick of the 90s.[64] Thus the film was categorized as high art. In 1996, however, before the *Film Comment* poll results were published, the film was listed in a special paracinema company mailing, *Video Vamp Presents Celebrity Skin Videos*, as a "French sleaze classic." Clearly, as Jameson suggests, we need to rethink the emphasis we have placed on evaluation and essentialized categorization and replace it with a mode of assessment that's a little more dynamic.

As I've suggested, horror is not the only genre/category which is hard to pin down and it's not the only genre/category which continually flirts with the possibility of existing simultaneously as high and low art.[65] To some degree, as William Paul asserts, all film still has something disreputable about it,[66] all film still has to struggle to be seen as art at all. And yet, we do, as he also notes, consistently make distinctions between good cinema and bad, between artistic films and films that are "just entertainment." Even within as democratic a medium as film, we worry about "taste," a phenomenon which, social critics from Pierre Bourdieu to V. Vale and Andrea Juno maintain, is always already bound up with questions of class.[67]

But while it is not the only popular genre which continually flirts with a kind of high-art double—in this case, the European art film or prestige import cinema—horror is perhaps the best vantage point from which to study the cracks that seem to exist everywhere in late twentieth-century "sacralized" film culture. Precisely because it plays so relentlessly on the body, horror's "low" elements are easy to see. As Joe Bob Briggs is fond of reminding us, fans of low horror are drawn by the body count ("We're talking two breasts, four quarts of blood, five dead bodies . . . Joe Bob says check it out").[68] And as catalogues from mail order video companies remind us, prestigious films, too, can play relentlessly on the public's desire—or at least its willingness—to be physically affronted. Like the lowest of low horror, European art films can "leave audiences gagging."

Joan Hawkins is an assistant professor in the Department of Communication and Culture at Indiana University, Bloomington. She is the author of *Cutting Edge: Art-Horror and the Horrific Avant-garde* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000).

Notes

A shorter version of this article was presented at the 1997 Society for Cinema Studies Conference. I would like to thank Chris Anderson, Carol J. Clover, Skip Hawkins, Eric Schaefer, Ann Martin, and the Editorial Board of *Film Quarterly*, all of whom read earlier versions of the essay and made helpful suggestions. Also, a special thanks to Eric Schaefer for his sensitive reading of the piece and the references he gave me.

1. See Jeffrey Sconce, "'Trashing' the Academy: Taste, Excess, and an Emerging Politics of Cinematic Style," *Screen* 36:4 (Winter 1995), 372. Michael Weldon calls this cinema "psychotronic." See Michael Weldon, *The Psychotronic Encyclopedia* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1983); Michael Weldon, *The Psychotronic Video Guide* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 1996). Subsequent references to these three works will be given in the text. See also Michael Weldon, ed. *Psychotronic Video* (serial, Narrowsburg, New York).
2. Remarkably little has been written on the low end of the mail order video business. Fanzines and mass-market horror publications periodically publish addresses and lists. But, since they're preaching to the converted, they provide very little analysis of the phenomenon. At the time of this writing, Sconce's "'Trashing' the Academy" remains the only article which attempts to theorize the phenomenon and the aesthetic it represents. The best general interest articles on mail order video were published in the July–August 1991 issue of *Film Comment*. See Elliot Forbes, "The 'Lost' World"; Maitland McDonagh, "The House by the Cemetery"; and Peter Hogue, "Riders of the Dawn," *Film Comment* 27 (July–Aug. 1991), 41–49. See also Richard Kadrey, "Director's Cuts," *World Art* 3/1996, 64–68, which discusses the aesthetic of bootlegs. Tony Williams' "Resource Guide: Video Sales and Rentals," *Jump Cut* 37 (1992), 99–109, and "Mail Order and Video Companies II, "*Jump Cut* 41 (1994), 110–118, mainly list companies. It's interesting, though, that in an article geared mainly toward teachers and film professionals, Williams mentions paracinema companies as well as more upscale, traditional sources.
3. For years, scholars have been challenging the binary opposition of high art and popular culture, and have been problematizing the uninflected use of the two terms. But the 1993 General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) discussions over audiovisual products illustrated the degree to which the North American mainstream press continues to reproduce and valorize a dichotomy which cultural scholars and fans of paracinema find problematic. See Matthew Fraser, "A Question of Culture: The Canadian Solution Resolves a GATT Standoff," *MacLean's* v. 106 n. 52 (Canada, Dec 27, 1993), 50; David Lawday, "France Guns for Clint Eastwood," *U.S. News and World Report* v. 115 n.23 (Dec. 13, 1993), 72; and Daniel Singer, "GATT and the Shape of Our Dreams," *The Nation* v. 258 n. 2 (Jan 17, 1994), 54.

Carol J. Clover, "Her Body, Himself: Gender in the Slasher Film," *Representations* 20 (Fall 1987), 187.

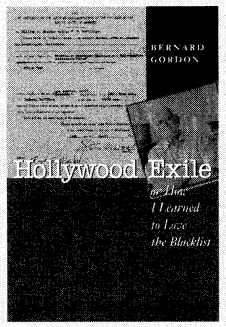
5. While most art-cinema mail order companies separate films into generic categories, Home Film Festival simply lists titles alphabetically—to similarly startling effect. In *Program Guide* #12, for example, George Romero's *Night of the Living Dead* (1968) comes between Charles Laughton's *Night of the Hunter* (1955) and Paolo and Vittorio Taviani's *Night of Shooting Stars* (1982). *Home Film Festival Program Guide* #12, 140.
6. The 1996–97 Sinister Cinema catalogue does list "Mexican Horr/Sci-fi" and "Spaghetti Westerns" as separate categories.
7. Ginette Vincendeau, *Encyclopedia of European Cinema* (New York: Facts on File, 1995), 327.
8. *Mondo Video Catalogue*: Mondo Video, Cookeville, Tennessee, n.d., n.p. One scholarly treatment which does emphasize the horror in Pasolini's films, albeit not as brutally as Mondo's catalogue, is Leo Bersani and Ulysse Dutoit, "Merde Alors: Pasolini's *Salò*," *October* No. 13 (Summer 1980), 23–35.
9. See Carol J. Clover, *Men, Women and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), and Linda J. Williams, "Film Bodies: Gender, Genre and Excess," in Barry Keith Grant, ed., *Film Genre Reader II* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995), 142. Subsequent references to the Williams article will be given in the text.
10. While most companies carry only softcore and exploitation titles, an increasing number are stocking hardcore and XXX European and Asian videos. Luminous carries some XXX titles. Video Search of Miami and European Trash Cinema carry hardcore (including hardcore S & M) titles. The descriptions for these titles always include a warning so that consumers of softcore porn will not purchase titles that are more violent and sexually explicit than they expect.

11. Internal quote taken from May Ann Doane, *The Desire to Desire: The Woman's Film of the 1940s* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 95.
12. Amos Vogel, *Film as a Subversive Art* (New York: Random House, 1974), 277. Subsequent citations will be given in the text.
13. It's interesting to note that there is a Eurotrash film with a similar theme to Brakhage's *The Act of Seeing with One's Own Eyes*. *Aftermath* (1994), by Spanish director Nacho Cerda, has created what *Luminous Film and Video Wurks Catalogue 3.0* calls "the most disgusting 30 minutes ever." Imagine that you have died, the catalogue invites, "and . . . you end up in the Autopsy room. You see with your own dead eyes death after death and you feel the painful dissection of your innards. . . . Very realistic fake (I hope) human corpses are dismembered and sexually assaulted in this beautifully shot short film. You must be 21 and over to order this sick piece of cinema."
14. See for example, Angela Carter, *The Sadeian Woman and the Ideology of Pornography* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978); Gilles Deleuze, "Coldness and Cruelty," in Deleuze, *Masochism*, trans. Jean McNeil (New York: Zone Books, 1989); and Jane Gallop, *Intersections: A Reading of Sade with Bataille, Blanchot and Klossowski* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1981). For related discussions on the cultural meaning of sadistic representations, see Georges Bataille, *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings 1927–1939*, trans. Allan Stoekl with Carl R. Lovitt and Donald M. Leslie Jr. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), and Linda Williams, "Power, Pleasure, and Perversion: Sadomasochistic Film Pornography," in Williams, *Hardcore* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 184–229.
15. See Jane Gallop, "The Bodily Enigma," in Gallop, *Thinking Through the Body* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988).
16. Laura Kipnis, "(Male) Desire and (Female) Disgust: Reading *Hustler*," in Kipnis, *Ecstasy Unlimited: On Sex, Gender, Capital and Aesthetics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 220.
17. See Carol J. Clover, *Men, Women and Chainsaws*; Linda Williams, "Film Bodies: Gender, Genre and Excess" and *Hardcore*; and Robin Wood, "Return of the Repressed," *Film Comment* (July–Aug. 1978), 25–32, "Gods and Monsters," *Film Comment* (Sept.–Oct. 1978), 19–25, and the horror chapters in *Hollywood from Reagan to Vietnam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986).
18. Carlos Clarens, *An Illustrated History of the Horror Film* (New York: Capricorn Books, 1967), 147–48.
19. Eric Schaefer, "Resisting Refinement: The Exploitation Film and Self-Censorship," *Film History* 6, no. 3 (1994), 293–313.
20. André Balazs, ed., *Hollywood Handbook* (New York: Universe Publishing, 1996), 85.
21. See *Film as a Subversive Art*.
22. A.S. Hamrah and Joshua Glenn, "Monsters, Sex, Sci-Fi, and Kung Fu," *Utne Reader* no. 70 (July–Aug., 1995), 30.
23. Bernard Weinraub, "Directors Fight for GATT's Final Cuts and Print," *New York Times* (Sunday, Dec. 12, 1993), 14.
24. Fredric Jameson, *Signatures of the Visible* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 14. Subsequent citations will be given in the text.

25. As Jeffrey Sconce has noted, however, paracinema culture does construct itself in opposition to cineaste or high cinema culture. Thus it is often in the odd position of both challenging/destroying and upholding binary oppositions.
26. Lawrence W. Levine, *Highbrow Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), 86. Subsequent citations given in the text.
27. This is the Spanish-language version of *Dracula* which Universal Studios made at the same time that Tod Browning was shooting *Dracula*. Directed by George Melford, the film utilizes essentially the same script and sets. The film stars Carlos Villarias in the role of the count; Lupita Tovar plays Eva.
28. The Home Film Festival (HFF) list doesn't carry many low-culture titles. Interestingly, *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974), which is part of the Museum of Modern Art's film collection, is not part of the list, while *Night of the Living Dead* is. While HFF carries mainly art-horror titles, Facets handles an extensive list of slasher/cult/horror films.
29. Although upscale mail order video companies do tend to carry some low-genre titles, the sense that they are low-genre titles is clearly part of the marketing ploy. *Facets Multimedia Catalogue No. 14*, for example, contains a "Guilty Pleasures" section.
30. Peter M. Nichols, "A Hard Sell, Those Little French Films," *New York Times* (Sunday, June 23, 1996), H 29. Subsequent citations given in text.
31. Here I'm including the work of directors like Dario Argento, Jess Franco, Lucio Fulci, Jean Rollin, and Andrzej Zulawski.
32. Susan Sontag, "The Decay of Cinema," *New York Times Magazine* (Feb. 25, 1996), 60–61.
33. See Timothy Corrigan, *A Cinema Without Walls: Movies and Culture after Vietnam* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1991); Thomas Elsaesser, *New German Cinema: A History* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1989); and Jill Forbes, *The Cinema in France after the New Wave* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992).
34. Peter Greenaway, Rainer Werner Fassbinder, and Bertrand Blier are some notable exceptions to this. I should also mention that post-1970 films by the "classic" directors are usually included—Godard's *Every Man for Himself* (1980), Fellini's *Intervista* (1988). It's also interesting to note that not all the films have subtitles. Luminous Film and Video Wurks provide a wider selection of contemporary European art films than most other companies do.
35. Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (New York: Routledge, 1987).
36. Richard Kadrey treats the paracinema subculture as part of a larger consumer (subculture) group which he identifies as "covert" or "fringe." See Richard Kadrey, *Covert Culture Sourcebook* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993) and *Covert Culture Sourcebook 2.0* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994).
37. This is the only qualitative distinction which the catalogues make—films which require ironized strategies of reading and those which don't. It's important to note, however, that films which don't are not considered better (or worse) than the ones that do—just different.
38. Sinister Cinema catalogue, 12.
39. The reviewer does admit that "Harvey's direction has a weird flair, sometimes suggesting a throwback to the silent days and drawing a kind of awkward honesty out of the actors." Phil Hardy, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Horror Movies* (New York: Harper and Row,1986), 147. Subsequent references will be given in the text.
40. *Sinister Cinema Catalogue*, 21.
41. Kyrou wrote, "Je vous en conjure, apprenez à voir les 'mauvais' films, ils sont parfois sublimes" ("I beg you, learn to see 'bad' films; they are sometimes sublime"). Ado Kyrou, *Le Surréalisme au cinéma*, 276. Translation mine.
42. Steven Shaviro, *The Cinematic Body* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), vii.
43. This is part of the "exploitation" definition given by Thomas Doherty, in *Teenagers and Teenpics: The Juvenilization of American Movies in the 1950s* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1988), 8.
44. Peter Lev, *The Euro-American Cinema* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1993), 8.
45. That impression persists to this day. "People see 'French video' in the phone book," Donna Sayada, the owner of Video France, said in a 1996 interview, "and they think it's either highbrow cultural stuff or it's porno. . . . You should hear some of the calls we get." Peter M. Nichols, "A Hard Sell, Those Little French Films," H29.
46. See Pauline Kael, "*Last Tango in Paris*," in Pauline Kael, *For Keeps* (New York: Dutton, 1994), 450; reprinted from Kael, *Reeling* (1976).
47. Michael F. Mayer, *Foreign Films on American Screens* (New York: Arco, 1965), 1–3.
48. Kristin Thompson and David Bordwell, *Film History: An Introduction* (New York: McGraw–Hill, 1994), 386.
49. "Parochial Uproar in Ft. Lee; Panics Before 'Foreign Art Films,'" *Variety* (Wednesday, Feb. 24, 1960), 24, 3.
50. In fact, Hollywood's attempt to compete for art film audiences has much to do with the fact that the traditional moviegoing base had been eroded. Staiger points out that younger, better-educated people were more likely to go to the movies than older, less-educated people. These people had very different tastes from the "masses." As Staiger notes, "while the 'masses' were not especially attracted to 'realism' or 'message' pictures, art-house audiences were typified as preferring those films." Janet Staiger, *Interpreting Films: Studies in the Historical Reception of American Cinema* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 185. For more information, see all of chapter 9. Douglas Gomery concurs, noting that audience studies "found that art theatres attracted persons of above-average education, more men than women and many solitary movie-goers. This was the crowd who attended the opera, theatre, lectures and ballet." Douglas Gomery, *Shared Pleasures: A History of Movie Presentation in the United States* (Madison: Wisconsin University Press, 1992), 189.
51. Staiger, *Interpreting Films*, 184.
52. Richard Kadrey, *Covert Culture Sourcebook*, 1.
53. A few minutes into *Un Chien andalou*, a man—played by Luis Buñuel—slices open a woman's eye with a razor. To gauge from student responses when I show the film in class, the segment has lost none of its power to shock and horrify the spectator, to act directly on the spectator's body.
54. *Men, Women and Chainsaws*, 21.

55. William Paul, *Laughing Screaming: Modern Hollywood Horror and Comedy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 32. Subsequent citations will be given in the text.
56. Lack of cause and effect, and strategic use of discontinuous editing, also links these films with exploitation cinema, which, as Eric Schaefer points out, can utilize similar techniques because of their reliance on forbidden spectacle. And it's a key feature of almost all European horror films made during the 1956–84 period. As Cathal Tohill and Pete Tombs point out, "Linear narrative and logic are always ignored in a *fantastique* [horror] film." Cathal Tohill and Pete Tombs, *Immoral Tales: European Sex and Horror Movies 1956–1984* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 1994), 5.
57. See Raymond Durgnat, "*Freaks*," *Films and Filming* vol. 9, no. 1 (Aug. 1963), 23.
58. See David F. Friedman (with Don DeNevi), *A Youth in Babylon: Confessions of a Trash-Film King* (Buffalo, N.Y.: Prometheus Books, 1990).
59. See David J. Skal, *The Monster Show: A Cultural History of Horror* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1993), and Patricia Bosworth, *Diane Arbus* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984). I have written at greater length on the film elsewhere. See "*One of Us*: Tod Browning's *Freaks*," in Rosemarie Garland Thomson, ed., *Freakery: Cultural Spectacles of the Extraordinary Body* (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 265–76; and David J. Skal and Elias Savada, "Offend One and You Offend Them All," in Skal and Savada, *Dark Carnival: The Secret World of Tod Browning* (New York: Anchor Books, 1995) 159–82. Future citations of *The Monster Show* will be given in the text.
60. Derek Hill, "Cheap Thrills," *Tribune* (London: April 29, 1960), 11.
61. S.S. Prawer, *Caligari's Children: The Film as Tale of Terror* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1980), 37–38.
62. Jim Collins, *Architectures of Excess: Cultural Life in the Information Age* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 131.
63. Robin Wood, "Ideology, Genre, Auteur," in Gerald Mast, Marshall Cohen, and Leo Braudy, eds., *Film Theory and Criticism*, fourth edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 478.
64. Gavin Smith, "Foreign Affairs: Which Foreign Films Must Be Seen At All Costs," *Film Comment* vol. 33, no. 4 (July-Aug. 1997), 40–41.
65. Comedy, thrillers, sci-fi, and melodrama all have this ability. Jim Collins has done an excellent job of analyzing the way "the eclecticism of the contemporary genre films involves a hybridity of conventions that works at cross-purposes with the traditional notion of genre as a stable, integrated set of narrative and stylistic conventions." *Architectures of Excess*, 126.
66. See Paul, *Laughing Screaming*.
67. See Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984); William Paul, *Laughing Screaming*; and V. Vale and Andrea Juno, "Introduction," in Jim Morton (guest editor), *Incredibly Strange Films*, RE/SEARCH #10 (San Francisco: RE/SEARCH, 1986), 4-6.
68. Quoted in *Men, Women and Chainsaws*, 21. See also note, 22.

Hollywood Exile, or How I Learned to Love the Blacklist
By Bernard Gordon



"Bernard Gordon was the writer behind some of my favorite movies (but I never knew it). Now, he tells his most riveting story—that of his own colorful career. . . . Fascinating!"
—Joe Dante, director

In this highly readable memoir, Gordon tells an engrossing insider's story of what it was like to be blacklisted in Hollywood during the McCarthy era and how he and others continued to work uncredited behind the scenes, writing and producing many box office hits and cult classics. He recounts the making of many movies for which he was the writer and/or producer, including *El Cid, 55 Days at Peking, The Thin Red Line, Day of the Triffids,* and others, with wonderful anecdotes about stars such as Charlton Heston, David Niven, Sophia Loren, Ava Gardner, and James Mason; directors Nicholas Ray, Frank Capra, and Anthony Mann; and the producer–studio head team of Philip Yordan and Samuel Bronston.
Texas Film and Media Studies Series, Thomas Schatz, Editor
335 pp., b&w photos
$34.95 hardcover

Gender and Society in Contemporary Brazilian Cinema
By David William Foster
In this first study of Brazilian cinematic representations of gender ideology, Foster explores three broad themes: construction of masculinity, constructions of feminine and feminist identities, and same-sex positionings and social power. Within his discussions of thirteen recent films ranging from *Jorge um brasileiro* to *A hora da estrela* to *Beijo no asfalto*, he offers new ways of understanding national ideals and stereotypes, sexual dissidence (homoeroticism and transgenderism), heroic models, U.S./Brazilian relations, revolutionary struggle, and human rights violations.
181 pp., b&w photos
$14.95 paperback, $30.00 hardcover

Cinema of Anxiety
A Psychoanalysis of Italian Neorealism
By Vincent F. Rocchio
This boldly revisionist book combines Lacanian psychoanalysis with narratology and Marxist critical theory to examine the previously neglected relationship between Italian Neorealist films and the historical spectators they address. Rocchio builds his analysis around case studies of the films *Rome: Open City, Bicycle Thieves, La Terra Trema, Bitter Rice,* and *Senso*. These case studies—among the first outside of feminist film theory to bring the ideas of Lacan to theories of cinema—offer innovative methods that reinvigorate film analysis.
204 pp., b&w photos
$17.95 paperback, $35.00 hardcover

At bookstores, or request our film and media studies catalog.

UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS PRESS
800-252-3206
www.utexas.edu/utpress

J. P. Telotte

Verhoeven, Virilio, and "Cinematic Derealization"

> In making attack unreal, industrial warfare ceased to be that huge funeral apparatus denounced by moralists and eventually became the greatest mystification of all: an apparatus of deception.
>
> –Paul Virilio[1]

> No wonder you're having nightmares; you're always watching the news.
>
> –*Total Recall*

In describing the advent of modern industrial and technologically driven warfare, Paul Virilio explains how "the landscape of war became cinematic,"[2] with its emphases on reconnaissance, visual interpretation, and strategies for confusing perception. In effect, warfare came to draw upon and eventually share many of the basic concerns and strategies of the movies. Yet as we have seen with recent conflicts, the key fallout of this strange visual kinship is that warfare itself becomes a kind of detached spectacle, an image as divorced from the real destruction of objects and bodies it entails as any generic war film, and thus all the more difficult to appreciate or understand. For in the process, what Virilio terms "cinematic derealization" has itself become almost invisible—as our lingering fascination with and reluctance to pass moral judgment on the images "taken" by all of our cinematic smartbombs during the Gulf War attests.

I would like to rematerialize this filmic fallout by looking in what might initially seem a rather unlikely place, Paul Verhoeven's new science fiction film about intergalactic warfare, *Starship Troopers*. For here Verhoeven does not simply emphasize the destruction, dismemberment, and death that war inevitably involves—although certainly the film has been scored precisely for its level of violence—but he examines the whole "apparatus of deception": the ways in which we see, the careful controls on our perception, and the messages attached to our perceptions. The result is a film that by turns seems to support war and to outrage us at its costs, to involve us cinematically in its compelling actions and to war against those same filmic compulsions. It is a text, then, that might help us see the difficulties posed by those derealizations in which we all too easily conspire.

For Paul Virilio, war has clearly co-opted our various visual technologies. Virtual reality has provided us with fighter, helicopter, and tank simulaters for training our troops. Satellite photography provides the maps that are fed into the guidance systems of our self-guided cruise missiles. Television has become the eye that guides our bombs, that helps us kill all the more efficiently. And in all cases, because of the distant, detached ways in which they promote our seeing, these technologies foster, as he puts it, "the accident of reality itself," a pervasive sense of "derealization."[3] Virilio's analysis of derealization in all of its forms thus becomes, as Arthur Kroker offers, an effort at trying to establish "a focus of recuperation,"[4] a way of seeing outside of what he terms "the sight machine" of modern technology, modern warfare, and modern culture—outside of the sort of artificial environment in which

Starship Troopers: the depiction of war

postmodern humans typically seem to live their astronautic lives. It is in just this sense, as a body of texts attempting to recuperate our sense of the real, that I want to suggest we view Verhoeven's work.

Paul Verhoeven, we should note from the start, has been criticized a number of times for the mixed messages his films seem to send, for the sort of irresolution that may be a strange byproduct of this derealization. The much lambasted *Showgirls* (1996), for example, by turns titillates with its inside glimpses of Las Vegas's elaborate efforts to turn sex into a show and sends up that same sex culture. As a result, the film at times seems to exploit its female stars, particularly Elizabeth Berkley, in ways that are not much different from the Las Vegas casinos themselves—or even from pornographic cinema. Earlier, Verhoeven's *Total Recall* (1990) offered a protagonist who might be either a revolutionary working to help the underground on Mars against a repressive corporate dictator, or a plant by that same leader, put in position to betray the underground. Yet the film also avoided a neat resolution, for even as the ambiguous figure of Quaid/Hauser triumphs, freeing himself from Cohaagen's control, restoring an atmosphere to Mars, and liberating the oppressed—doing all we expect from and even enjoy in the typical action/adventure film—he also suddenly has "a terrible thought" that subverts the entire narrative: "What if this *is* a dream?" That qualm is fitting not only in the context of the film's subplot about a company that can implant any sort of dream we might desire—the ultimate extension of both the film industry's ideological work and the propaganda arm of the war industry—but also in the context of Verhoeven's repeated blurring of distinctions between dream and reality, between one reading of his text and another, in effect, the extent to which his films always seem decidedly dialogic texts, themselves cinematic conflicts. As Johanna Schmertz perceptively notes in her discussion of *Total Recall*, Verhoeven's films often evoke "contradictory political extremes" and allow "the multiple readings they suggest to emerge without attempting to resolve them."[5]

That seeming irresolution or blurring of distinctions, along with its connections to Verhoeven's sense of a pervasive derealization, comes into sharp focus in *Starship Troopers*' depiction of warfare. For as in Verhoeven's other films, this work, on one level, seems to invite an easy reading, to encourage, in the best tradition of two big-budget items, our contemporary action/adventure films and our smartbombs with their unique technological vantage, an audience identification and satisfaction.[6] Thus one reviewer described it as "the sci-fi movie for those who like their action

breathless and their special effects big," and another praised it as "total spectacle rewarding a huge budget."[7] In this respect it seems to mimic the sort of Gulf War perspective Virilio describes. Yet at the same time, it has also been attacked for its excesses in these directions, in essence, for pushing the impulses—or maybe we should say, the implications—of its action/adventure model to an extreme, and in the process perhaps subverting that model's basic premises. Thus Richard Schickel derides the film's seeming emphasis on "slam-bang" action, while Roger Ebert essentially dismisses it as "the most violent kiddie movie ever made," seeing at the heart of its unalloyed violence a kind of "totalitarian" vision.[8] While all of these reactions have reason, we might also see them in light of the film's focus on derealization itself. For *Starship Troopers* seems intent on exaggerating its effects, its conventions, its very lures in order to throw us into a state of irresolution, and to force us to explore the premises from which both warfare and our cinematic visions of it proceed. From this vantage, viewers might begin to explore a crucial issue: the extent to which our sense of reality has become conditioned by cinematic effects and our ability to decide between "contradictory . . . extremes"—as the reviews might imply—has been undermined.

We can begin this exploration by looking at Verhoeven's focus on the media and how it serves that derealizing function Virilio describes, particularly in the science fiction context. Prior to coming to the United States, as Verhoeven notes, he "went much more to a realistic approach" to his material, in part because of his frequent collaboration with screenwriter Gerard Soeteman, whom he describes as "a historian and an extremely realistic person." Upon coming to America, though, Verhoeven says he felt as if he were "going back to my childhood" and was free to do the sort of special effects movies "I always liked . . . when I was a kid."[9] And he has arguably achieved his best success with the science fiction films he has made here, as films like *Robocop* (1987) and *Total Recall* attest. Thus, we should hardly be surprised that, after the financial and critical failure of *Showgirls*, he would return to science fiction with *Starship Troopers*. However, this return may have less to do with the seemingly bankable nature of this genre today or Verhoeven's familiarity with it than with something implicit in its formula, its built-in capacity for emphasizing and exploring that cinematic derealization of which Virilio speaks, and in the process opening up a potential for interrogation. As Garrett Stewart has offered, "Science fiction in the cinema often turns out to be, turns round to be, the fictional or fictive science of the cinema itself, the future feats it may achieve scanned in line with the technical feat that conceives them right now and before our eyes."[10] From this vantage, every science fiction film is implicitly about the phenomenon of film itself, foregrounded through the form's ubiquitous "banks of monitors, outsized video intercoms, X-ray display panels, hologram tubes, backlit photoscopes, aerial scanners, telescopic mirrors, illuminated computer consoles, overhead projectors, slide screens, radar scopes"[11] and so on—all elements very familiar to Verhoeven's audience. If we overlook the reflexive impulse in *Showgirls* when the protagonist is told that "you *are* the show," we should find that point far move obvious, and, as Stewart might contend, even expected in the science fiction context of *Starship Troopers*.

Total Recall's ambiguous protagonist

But Verhoeven's films are out for much bigger game than the movies, or even the movieness of science fiction. They are far more concerned with exploring the sort of human situation in which we typically find ourselves today, with reality a kind of border game, a perpetually mediated experience of the sort Jean Baudrillard describes in his *The Ecstasy of Communication*, and one that makes resolution or determination such a problematic thing. This position, seen especially in Verhoeven's borderline or detached figures—his half-human, half-machine robocop, his *possibly* dreaming Quaid/Hauser, or his troopers dropped onto a distant and ugly planet—suggests the sort of astronautic identity Baudrillard sees as the inevitable lot of postmodern humanity, as the self seems "isolated in a position of perfect sovereignty, at an infinite distance from his original universe; that is to

say, in the same position as the astronaut in his bubble, existing in a state of weightlessness . . . in perpetual orbital flight" around "his planet of origin"[12]—or even his very identity. Yet it is not quite the situation to which Verhoeven's films aspire, or that Schmerz's sense of their irresolute political posture describes. Rather, these films reflect the *liminal* position in which *we* find ourselves in such a derealized context; they suggest our need to find an anchor, a posture, and ultimately a judgment *we*—rather than our media—can make on such a problematic world.

Of course, the pervasive and derealizing presence of the media in *Starship Troopers*, as in all of Verhoeven's science fiction films, emphasizes the great difficulty in finding such a secure vantage. Here news reports, advertisements, propaganda broadcasts from the Federal Network, interplanetary video calls, as well as the pervasive video monitors, targeting devices, navigational screens, and so on that Stewart describes, help build a heavily mediated environment. In this context the characters, quite literally astronauts, must depend, almost as a matter of life or death, on the various sensors, radios, range finders, and position monitors with which, as soldiers of the future, they are plentifully equipped and on which they are trained to rely unquestioningly. If in this artificial environment human senses initially seem far less important, precise, or even reliable, *Starship Troopers* eventually troubles that reliance on electronic mediation through its ships that plunge out of control, lost radios, faulty equipment, and false messages that lure the troopers into traps. Through these repeated failures of our artificial senses within artificial realms, the film consistently dramatizes the difficulty of fighting in, living in, and even making sense of a derealized world.

A more precise focus on the very conditions of derealization quickly surfaces in *Starship Troopers'* opening, which establishes a media context for the narrative and foregrounds the conditions under which we see in this future world. The film begins in the middle of things, with a propaganda bombardment from the Federal Network, that unified media voice that seems to interpret reality for a unified world. It is an enlistment video, urging young people to "Join Now" and reminding them that service in the Mobile Infantry or other military arms "guarantees citizenship." That call for recruits is interrupted by a live video feed, on-location footage showing the invasion of the "bug planet" Klendathu, which has been bombarding Earth with asteroids and whose insect denizens have been competing violently with Earth people in their colonization of other planets. This media presentation of the situation—through our electronic eyes and ears—places us in what critics often term an audiovisual culture and, thanks to the absence of narrative context, leaves us somewhat disoriented.

As Kevin Robins and Les Levidow explain in their analysis of the Gulf War, though, our many "new image and vision technologies" have also come to "play a central role" in efforts to counter such disorientation by involving us "in a kind of remotely exhilarating tele-action" against "alien and thing-like enemies."[13] Thus for all of its rapid pace and images of confusion, that mediated opening also draws the lines here easily and starkly. The rhetoric of citizenship and duty, the video on "Why We Fight" that recalls Frank Capra's famous World War II propaganda series,[14] the broadcast images of human slaughter, the humorous "home front" scene of children gleefully stomping on insects—all of these elements, no less than the very notion of a "bug" adversary, suggest a right and even necessary line of action, one hammered again and again in video presentations throughout the film. As we gain our bearings amid these media presentations, we quickly gather that, as one of the characters here puts it, "We're in this for the species"—in a war the stakes of which are simply the survival of humanity. However, the action scenes broadcast live from Klendathu, complete with images of an impaled news broadcaster, a cameraman who is also killed by an attacking bug, and repeated images of human terror, quickly suggest that, as we hear repeatedly shouted by the troops, both on and off camera, "something's wrong" here.

What's wrong is, in part, the failure of derealization, as killing becomes not a sanitized, distant act, but

Robocop: protective cover

a bloody and direct confrontation, as the bugs strike back at their cosmic exterminators. But what is even more "wrong" is the very spirit at the heart of this enterprise, the training for this cinematized warfare. As the narrative flashes back to a year before this calamitous invasion, to what we might hesitantly term a "real" rather than a mediated experience, we see the sort of indoctrination that has made this massive human destruction possible. It is, on the one hand, the formal education offered in Mr. Rasczak's classroom, which speaks of the power of violence and reinforces the call to "citizenship," a call which has already cost him an arm but one that his students seem almost eager to accept with few real questions asked. On the other, it is the informal lessons of violent aggression, inculcated in the futuristic football game in which Johnny Rico stars. Both elements come together in the further education offered by the Mobile Infantry training camp, which naturally emphasizes violence and harshly deals with those who ask questions or challenge authority. Faced with a particularly large and challenging recruit, for example, Sergeant Zim simply breaks his arm, and when another asks why troopers need to learn how to use a knife, he stands that recruit against a wall and impales his hand with the knife. In a live-fire training exercise, a third recruit complains about his helmet and protective visor, noting that he can't see with it on. But when Johnny, his squad commander, helps him remove it, he is accidentally shot in the head and killed by his comrades. The point is a simple, as well as a simply violent one: in this world, one's perceptions are always carefully guided, controlled, even obscured by video, by teachers, by all of our training—all of which here constitute this audiovisual culture—and to question or attempt to remove those cultural constraints, both the real and the invisible "helmets" we all wear, is a very dangerous move,[15] one even punished by the culture, as we see when Rico is publicly flogged for his carelessness in this case. The new "cyborg soldier," as Robins and Levidow term it, has to be carefully "constructed and programmed" at all costs.[16]

Starship Troopers: training for war

And yet this futuristic global federation offers, particularly through its own constant reflexive commentary, the media environment it creates, a great illusion of freedom and choice. The various news reports that we view throughout the film and that frame the entire narrative, recalling the news shows and commercials that dot the narratives of *Robocop* and *Total Recall*, here seem part of a universal computerized video feed. After each "news bite" a question appears, "Want to know more?" along with a prompt to a hypertext link, a button to be pressed for further information. The film's quick shifts from one story to another, though, never lead to that "more," never link to the full story, never present us with anything but the most superficial, headline-style information, much as we already get from our televised evening news or the various internet news services. These brief bites are logical extensions of the "Mediabreak" news show that begins *Robocop* and provides the opening lines for that film: "You give us three minutes and we'll give you the world."[17] Yet in the world of *Starship Troopers*, no one seems to have three minutes for "thoughtful" consideration—or for any undisturbed activity, even sex, as we see when Johnny and Diz are interrupted when they finally succumb to each other's attractions. Perceptions are simply controlled by the media so that no bothersome ideological or species issues intrude; there seems a complete dissociation between war and its moral consequences. Although the high-school teacher Mr. Rasczak leaves his class with the injunction that "figuring things out for yourself is the only *real* freedom anyone has," that remark clashes with a narrative wherein all we see is a constant impulse to conformity and to action based on a kind of unexamined sense of rightness—an impulse partly responsible for the reviews that charge the film with harboring a fascist mentality.

The film's allusions to Frank Capra's World War II series, "Why We Fight," further underscores this illusion of information and choice while also pointing up the problematic messages that attach to these controlled perceptions. Designed as an aid to a democratic army and based on the belief that, as Capra put it, "free men are better fighting men when they are well informed,"[18] those earlier films sought to empower American troops,

and eventually home-front audiences, with information about our participation in World War II, particularly about "the causes and events leading up to our entry into the war," as the opening of *Prelude to War* (1942) puts it. The same principle carried over to subsequent efforts Capra supervised, the *Know Your Ally* and *Know Your Enemy* films, also evoked here with the video, *Know Your Foe*. While Capra's films were certainly propaganda, part of what he forthrightly termed "the struggle for men's minds,"[19] they were couched in the form of rhetorical argument. In *Starship Troopers*' videos, though, we see no pretense at argument, only exaggerations, sloganeering, cheerleading, as if the audience in this war, much like the recruits we see in basic camp, needed no real information other than the best ways to kill. And in fact, that is precisely the substance of several videos in the middle of the film. For in one news video offering an overview of "A World That Works," we learn that human executions are now televised throughout the world, and in the *Know Your Foe* presentation we watch, albeit with a "censored" patch on the screen, a cow being slaughtered by a captured bug to demonstrate that species' ferocity, and in turn a bug being blasted to pieces—in this case without the "censored" patch—by soldiers who are instructed to aim for its central nervous system in order to make a quicker kill. Beyond such limited technical information, beyond too the telling sense of what constitutes obscene violence in this future world, apparently all we *need* to know here is that reiterated slogan, "The Only Good Bug Is a Dead Bug."

And yet, for all of these simplistic and jingoistic notions, another message filters into the narrative: that finally, outside of our audiovisual environment, we are very much like the bugs. On the broadest level, the film emphasizes that the people of Earth are, after all, seeking more planetary space for colonization, just as the bugs are. And as we watch the human invasion of the insects' home planet, we cannot help but be struck by the extent to which our large ships resemble great bugs, and the small troop carriers, as they leave the larger ships, suggest a swarm of insects. More particularly, the paralleling of wanton and cold-blooded killing in the video scenes of cow and bug and bug and soldiers obviously points in this direction. Much as in the case of the football game, these and other video images emphasize that both species are extremely violent and even efficient killers. That comparison, of course, is a distasteful one for a variety of reasons, yet one that the film invites us to explore, particularly as a general who has managed to survive a bug attack announces his realization that "They're just like us. They want to know us so they can kill us." It is a blurring of distinctions that invites, indeed, that practically compels us to consider and to assert that we might be something more than violent insects.

Part of that similarity is that the bugs have also evolved a higher order of intelligence, embodied in what the humans term a "brain bug." It is a troubling recognition, since we typically appeal to the notion of mind or intelligence to distinguish ourselves from other species, and in this instance as a key strategic advantage over the simply reactive bug adversary. Thus Johnny's friend Carl notes that the attack on Klendathu failed because "We thought we were smarter than the bugs." Several times the Federal Network broadcasts advertisements bearing the message, "If you think you're psychic, maybe you are," and urging viewers to be tested for such special powers. It is a message that might seem a bit out of place in a narrative apparently so intent on visualizing physical destruction, on suggesting just how *unthinking* our own race seems to have become, but an interesting suggestion of what might become of the human brain in a derealized environment. The point is that Capra's "struggle for men's minds" here becomes, quite literally, a struggle *with* men's minds, now turned into weapons. As we learn through the case of Carl, the brain becomes not a resource for making decisions, for asking questions, for outthinking the bug enemy, but rather a device for reading their minds, and thus just one more of those tools for military surveillance and intelligence of which Virilio speaks. Under military control, the human mind, particularly as embodied in Carl (whom we see dressed in a uniform clearly modeled on that of the Nazi Gestapo), becomes yet another kind of *sensor*, as is emphasized when Carl touches a captured brain bug, concentrates on its thought patterns, and announces to great cheers, "It's afraid."

The final video which ends the film—and thus frames the entire narrative with a mediated reality—celebrates the promise bound up in that sensing, that is, the ultimate victory of the human species, although it does so in a decidedly derealized fashion. These closing media images of an isolated victory, of troops cheering Zim, who has captured the brain bug, and of scientists on Earth probing and analyzing that creature, distance and detach us from the many images of slaughter and dismemberment we have seen. As in so many traditional war films, the bloody deaths of characters such as Rasczak and Diz leave no emotional residue in the larger context of happiness, congratulation, and celebration offered in the final video. In fact, the film finally provides us with no escape or distance from this

media dream, since it ends up precisely where the film started, with the video and its jingoistic reassurance that the starship troopers "will keep fighting. And they'll win." If this ending that merges the film narrative with the propaganda video satisfies on one level, assuring us, after all, that we have received precisely the sort of payoff we have come to expect from the traditional war film—the promise of victory for "our side"—it also carries another weight in light of the film's exploration of derealization. For obviously the other struggle which we shall have to "keep fighting," and unfortunately one that seems quite beyond the perspectives of the characters within the narrative, is the fight against the apparatus of deception and derealization, against the fallout from the very technologies that have made this small victory possible, but at the cost of, as we come to see, a fascistic controlled perspective.

My initial reference here to Virilio's view of modern warfare should help us place this perspective in its proper context. Verhoeven's science fiction films repeatedly seem to be, after the audience-appealing fashion of so many other big-budget action films of the last two decades, about large-scale conflict: the urban warfare between police and criminals of *Robocop*, the Martian revolutionary struggle detailed in *Total Recall*, and the interplanetary, species warfare of *Starship Troopers*. Traditionally, such a context allows viewers to draw lines rather starkly, to align their point of view with one side and vilify the opposition, to easily determine a right and wrong, as we see especially in films like *Earth Versus the Flying Saucers* (1956), *Star Wars* (1977), *Independence Day* (1996), or especially a work Verhoeven terms one of the favorite movies of his adolescent years, *The War of the Worlds* (1956).[20] Certainly, Verhoeven's films in part draw on this same narrative economy. *Robocop*, for example, relishes painting the criminals of Old Detroit as unredeemable slime (actually *toxic waste* is the comparison the film makes) and the police who oppose them as heroic. Yet as recent global and national affairs remind us, this dynamic ultimately has less to do with reality than with cinematic formulae and the very power of a cinematic seeing, the vantage afforded by an audiovisual culture, our ability to make the screen the scene of all action, real and otherwise. And Verhoeven repeatedly reminds us of this truth with the reflexive dimension of his films—the commercials, newscasts, dream machines, viewing devices, and broad range of methods of mechanical reproduction they evoke. Those elements emphasize that all of our opinions, what we take for certitude, may simply be, like the dreams offered to Quaid/Hauser in *Total Recall*, little more than store-bought delusions conjured up by a mediated world. They might just be the propaganda of an audiovisual culture, the "mystification" produced by an apparatus of deception.

But that very strategy, Verhoeven's representing the cinematizing of conflict in *Starship Troopers* and elsewhere, works an interesting and telling twist on Virilio's view of modern warfare. Kroker suggests that we see Virilio's works as "actually little war machines: violent speedways which deconstruct everything in their path,"[21] and that description, I would suggest, seems equally fitting for Verhoeven's texts, which work their own reversal on conflict as Virilio describes it. That is, while warfare has become cinematic and in the process derealized—drained of its frightening impact, detached

Starship Troopers: modern warfare

from its ideological context, turned into one more overly determined spectacle which we are invited to watch with detached interest and without fear that any disturbing ideological questions might arise—his films use that understanding to turn the cinema itself, along with its own compelling derealizing effects, into a site of conflict, of warring points of view, of divergent possibilities that challenge us to sort them out. In *Robocop* we repeatedly hear that Murphy is not a person, but a machine; as Bob Morton of OCP says, he "doesn't have a name; he's got a program. He's product." Yet he is also recognizably Murphy—his name and very identity acknowledged in the last lines of the film. Quaid/Hauser of *Total Recall* may well be both a rebel leader and a counter-revolutionary, but he seemingly brings a whole new climate—both physical and political—to Mars. As Verhoeven explains, in this case he tried to craft a story in which "there are different realities possible at the same moment."[22] In the world of *Starship Troopers*, there are bugs and there are humans, or on another register, "civilians" and "citizens." These worlds of dialectical oppositions are presented so starkly that they can easily seduce us into seeing things in a monologic way, as in the "bad" bugs and "good" humans manner, but they can also impel us to recoil at such seductions, much as we might in the context of traditional satire. Of course, the postmodern audiovisual environment makes even reading satire a difficult proposition, since in a derealized realm we typically lack the sort of normative measure or moral centrality against which to gauge it—that which used to make the satirist's bite so quickly and deeply felt.

Yet Verhoeven's aim seems to reach beyond that of the traditional social satirist; he seems to be following the same trail that Virilio has been staking out in his efforts at recuperating our sense of the real. Verhoeven's science fiction texts, I have suggested, effectively dramatize the difficulty in such a recuperation and in the sort of seeing it involves. Certainly, we could read these films, as some critics have done *Starship Troopers*, as a kind of paralyzing presentation of confusing—or confused—oppositions, of alternative possibilities which the narratives stubbornly refuse to sort out for us, as if they were only embodying Rasczak's injunction to Johnny Rico about "figuring things out for yourself." We might read them in this way primarily because, whether we acknowledge it or not, we have come to see the postmodern, technological world largely in Baudrillard's terms, as not permitting resolution because it does not admit of reality itself; rather, it seems a realm of inevitable and irremediable detachment, on the one hand, and of seductive simulations, on the other. Yet Verhoeven's films not only hold out a possibility for an alternative attitude; they present it as imperative. They warn us, much as a trooper does the news cameraman on Klendathu, to "get out of here now." They remind us that our ultimate duty as "citizens" is to read the meaning that is manifestly there. They suggest that the real conflict in which we are all "troopers" is the war of meaning that audiovisual culture engages us in, a war requiring that we carefully deploy what Virilio terms the "logistics of perception" against that pervasive derealization and, in the process, set about recuperating nothing less than our sense of the real.

J. P. Telotte is Professor of Literature, Communication and Culture at Georgia Tech. His most recent book is *A Distant Technology: Science Fiction, Film, and the Machine Age* (Wesleyan University Press).

Notes

1. Paul Virilio, *War and Cinema: The Logistics of Perception*, trans. Patrick Camiller (London: Verson, 1989), p. 79.
2. Ibid., p. 70.
3. Louise Wilson, "Cyberwar, God and Television: Interview with Paul Virilio," *CTheory*, www.ctheory.com/a-cyberwar_god.html.
4. Arthur Kroker, *The Possessed Individual: Technology and the French Postmodern* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), p. 38.
5. Johanna Schmertz, "On Reading the Politics of *Total Recall*," *Post Script* 12.3 (1993), p. 36.
6. See Kevin Robins and Les Levidow's discussion of modern warfare in "Soldier, Cyborg, Citizen," in *Resisting the Virtual Life: The Culture and Politics of Information*, ed. James Brook and Iain A. Boal (San Francisco: City Lights, 1995), pp. 105–13. In this essay they point up the strange effects of the perspective afforded by all of our military technology. The "missile-nose view" of targets, they suggest, provides "a superreal closeness" accompanied by a sense of human "detachment." The result is a nearly debilitating paradox, a kind of "remote-intimate viewing" that can produce pleasure without making any moral demands (107).
7. See respectively the reviews by Jim Byerley, "*Starship Troopers*," *HBO Film Reviews*, www.hbo.com/filmreviews/reviews/starship_troopers.html, and Mike Clark, "'Troopers' on Beeline to Blockbuster," *USA Today*, www.usatoday.com/life/enter/movies/lef029.html.
8. Richard Shickel, "All Bugged Out, Again," *Time*, www.pathfinder.com/time/magazine/1997/dom/971110/the_arts_cine.all_bugged_ou.html, and Roger Ebert, "*Starship Troopers*," *Chicago Sun–Times*, www.suntimes/ebert.reviews/1997/11/110705.html.
9. Chris Shea and Wade Jennings, "Paul Verhoeven: An Interview," *Post Script* 12.3 (1993), p. 11.
10. "The 'Videology' of Science Fiction," in *Shadows of the Magic Lamp: Fantasy and Science Fiction in Film*, ed.

George E. Slusser and Eric S. Rabkin (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1985), p. 159.

11. Ibid., p. 161.
12. Jean Baudrillard, *The Ecstasy of Communication*, trans. Bernard and Caroline Schutze (New York: Semiotext[e], 1988), p. 17.
13. "Soldier, Cyborg, Citizen," p. 106.
14. Capra's "Why We Fight" series, made under the auspices of the Office of War Information, consists of seven films made between 1942 and 1944. The basic strategy of these works, as he describes in his autobiography, was the desire to turn the enemy's own words and images against them. They were, as a result, really a new sort of propaganda, as they fought the war of ideas totally within a kind of cinematically derealized context such as Virilio describes. See Capra's discussion of the series in his *The Name Above the Title: An Autobiography* (New York: Random House, 1985).
15. We should note here the marked similarity to *Robocop*'s scene in which the cyborg Murphy, now hunted by the very society he has served, removes his helmet and protective visor. Without that technological screen, as we see, his aim is a bit unsteady but he seems decidedly more human, and in the almost-loving embrace of his partner, Ann Lewis, he rapidly regains his orientation and precision.
16. "Soldier, Cyborg, Citizen," p. 107.
17. The Biblical allusion seems worth noting here, with television offering a kind of Satanic deal to its viewers. It promises the whole world if we can just give it our time, our lives. Such an end is the consequence Virilio sees in all of our efforts at derealization, particularly the current trend towards creating virtual realities. Through our technologies, he says, we are ultimately attempting "to reduce the world to the point where one could possess it" (Louise Wilson, "Cyberwar, God and Television"). In another vein, we might note that the repeated New Testament allusions in Robocop point towards Verhoeven's fascination with the life of Christ, which he has explored as a film project.
18. *The Name Above the Title*, p. 341.
19. Ibid., p. 329.
20. Shea and Jennings, p. 11.
21. *The Possessed Individual*, p. 29.
22. Shea and Jennings, p. 19.

Smithsonian Studies in the History of Film and Media

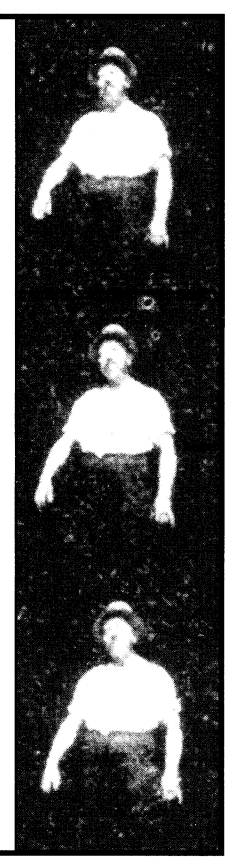
HONORABLE MENTION—THEATRE LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

Edison Motion Pictures, 1890-1900
An Annotated Filmography
Written and edited by Charles Musser

In this first systematic treatment of the more than nine hundred fictional and documentary films made by Thomas A. Edison during the 1890s, Charles Musser gives coherence and context to the archive through production specifications, Edison company summaries, newspaper accounts, frame enlargements, and other documentation.
643 b&w photographs • 720 pp. • Hardcover $75.00

Making Images Move
Photographers and Avant-Garde Cinema
Jan-Christopher Horak

"*Making Images Move* is an exceptionally valuable piece of scholarship, both in film and in photography. It's also a smart, erudite, feisty book that is at the same time deeply thoughtful and entertaining. . . . It will become a standard reference in film studies as well as in photographic history."—Charles Hagan, Bard College
50 b&w photographs • 320 pp. • Hardcover $36.95



Smithsonian Institution Press
PO Box 960 • Herndon, VA 20172 • 800/462-7812

John Gianvito

Remembrance of Films Lost

The history of cinema has always been a history of loss. In strictly material terms, the statistics are somber enough. Current estimates, according to the American Film Institute's National Center for Film and Video Preservation, are that 50 percent of films produced for theatrical use prior to 1951, when nitrate was replaced by safer acetate base stock, are now lost to us—presumably for good—the result of decades of deterioration, fire damage, and general neglect; of films produced prior to 1921, the figure may be as great as 80 percent.

Above and beyond the loss of material, the living history of cinema, like any other history, is riddled with memory losses which, while aggravated and accelerated by the physical extinction of so many works, also encompass vast amounts of significant achievement extant but little seen or heard of. What were revered classics for one generation of filmgoers slip into oblivion for the next, the result of everything from changes in taste to trends in the economics of theatrical and non-theatrical distribution to the withering of repertory cinema—conditions all symbiotically linked to a host of other factors as well. Moreover, given the sparse and markedly weak-willed tributes of cinema's centennial anniversary, it's no wonder the situation worsens. The short and the quick of it is, Who cares? And, Are those who do sufficient to the task of reversing what Susan Sontag has now infamously dubbed "the decay of cinema"?[1]

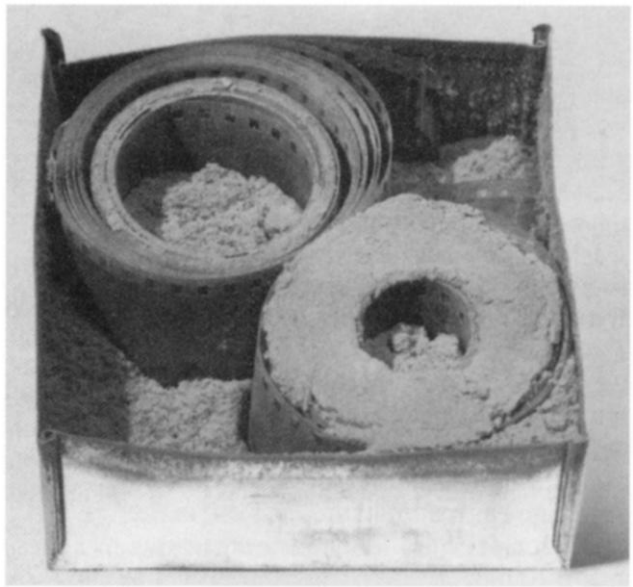
Tracing this vanishing, one is led to practically the first flickering, as if it was the medium's destiny to disappear as magically as it came into view. History relishes simplification, and while there is certain poetic appropriateness in bestowing the claim of the invention of cinema on brothers named Lumière, the actual history of the birthing of moving pictures is a complex saga involving numerous processes and inventors. Perhaps most pointed (and poignant) is the story of Louis Le Prince, a Frenchman who, while working in England and the United States between 1886 and 1888, developed both a single-lens movie camera employing perforated film and a separate projecting device. By 1890, Le Prince had directed and shown three films, this five years prior to the generally proclaimed date of the first film screenings by the Lumière brothers on December 28, 1895 (a date, as Godard has pointed out, that doesn't even mark the first Lumière screenings, which were earlier that year, but is rather a commemoration of the first time people paid money to see movies). As the story goes, on September 18th, 1890, Le Prince, while on a train to Paris to screen his films, mysteriously disappeared, never to be seen or heard from again. For years afterward, Le Prince's wife and collaborator Lizzie Le Prince struggled in vain to restore her husband's reputation until her own death in 1926.[2]

There are of course within the annals of film scholarship more notorious losses, such as the legendary missing reels of Stroheim's *Greed* (some additional five hours' worth, rumored to be sitting in MGM vaults); the tragically incinerated negative and workprint of Eisenstein's troubled 1935–37 production, *Bezhin Meadow*; von Sternberg's never released 1926 film *The Sea Gull/A Woman of the Sea* (withheld from view by its producer Charlie Chaplin); or Murnau's *Four Devils* (the negative of which, according to Lotte Eisner, exists in Fox Studio Archives, although no prints have been seen since its initial release), to name a few.

Fortunately however, every once in a while, as if tossed up from Atlantean depths, a film long believed lost resurfaces. A mislabelling error prevented the discovery until 1987 of Robert Bresson's first film, the comic short *Les Affaires publiques* (1934). While many books list Antonioni's 1965 film short *Il Provino* (*The Screentest*), his second experiment in color cinematography, as having been destroyed by its producer, a print of the film emerged in the early 90s and was included in a touring Antonioni retrospective. In 1988, work began to restore a previously unseen color version of Jacques Tati's classic first feature, *Jour de fête*. Shot simultaneously in color and black-and-white, the early untried color process proved at the time technically unprintable. Perhaps the most astonishing archival discovery in recent years was the uncovering in 1981 inside a mental hospital near Oslo, Norway, of a print of Carl Dreyer's *The Passion of Joan of Arc* struck from the original negative, which was destroyed in a fire in 1928. As a result of the fire, Dreyer had to cut a new version of the material from outtakes; this is, in fact, the version that has come down to us over the years, revered as one of cinema's greatest achievements. I can think of no other instance in film history in which a classic film has been restored wherein every image is different from the known version. (Having seen this print once only at a memorable screening in Northampton, Mass., with live choral accompaniment and score by Richard Einhorn, I could not readily discern what differences exist, as Dreyer shot an enormous number of takes of each scene and was thus able to reestablish to a considerable degree his original intentions. A close shot-by-shot study remains to be published.)

It is thus in the spirit of possibly fostering further discoveries that I have compiled the following personal list of films which over the years I have found fleeting mention of and which I can at least dream of one day seeing, films not only lost from view but in many cases absent from scholarly record.

VSEVOLOD MEYERHOLD—Still regarded as one of the twentieth century's foremost experimental theater innovators, Vsevolod Meyerhold brought his interest in the "grotesque" to the cinema in 1915 with his direction of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Casting himself in the role of Lord Henry and choosing an actress, Varvara Yanova, to play the role of Dorian Gray, Meyerhold sought to transform the "entirely inadequate" approaches to the film medium at the time. Employing luxuriant sets, bold chiaroscuro lighting effects, and impressionistic performances, Meyerhold's rendering of Oscar Wilde's tale of decadence was, according to



historian Jay Leyda, "original and daring as few films before it or since have dared to be. Russian artists who saw it and then *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* a few years later in Europe, tell me that if it had been shown abroad it would have surpassed *Caligari*'s reputation as a heightening of film art. It was undoubtedly the most important Russian film made previous to the February Revolution." A year later, Meyerhold further pushed his cinematic experiments with an adaptation of Polish writer Stanislaw Przybyszewski's novel *The Strong Man*, and in 1917 began work on a third film, entitled *Witchcraft*, which was uncompleted. No copies of these films are known to exist.

JEAN COCTEAU—In 1927, three years prior to making *The Blood of a Poet*, Cocteau made a 16mm experimental film featuring Lizzie Siddall and a group of actors whom Cocteau draped throughout in wet sheets. Alternately titled *Jean Cocteau fait du cinéma* or *Les Cigognes*, the film was never screened. Later Cocteau stated, "The wave that carries away all that I possess has also taken away the box with this film in it."

ALAIN RESNAIS—While Resnais's 1959 masterpiece, *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*, is often referred to as his first feature work, in 1946 he directed a silent 90-minute 16mm feature film entitled *Ouvert pour cause d'inventaire*. Apparently a largely non-narrative, semi-surrealist work, Resnais has said that its subject was the city of Paris. "I wanted to express what I had discovered at the age of twelve. It was a sort of diary; later that sort of thing was called 'camera-stylo,'" he said: images of a man and a woman who never meet up, lost in the city, images of the woman (played by Danièlle Delorme) ceaselessly climbing stairs. Delorme recalls the film as "an escapade in Paris, with an old raincoat which we were running after all the

time. An old raincoat, all dirty and worn." Agnès Varda, who is one of the few to have privately seen the film, has commented that "It was not a film that you can recount easily. Only a succession of pure sensations which never really reach the state of consciousness. An attempt to illustrate that silent world—fear, desire —which you can not really define. . . . It was the film of a provincial fascinated by Paris." Gérard Philipe had a small cameo in the film—in a telephone booth. The actor, who at the time lived in the same apartment as Resnais, portrayed a well-to-do roué, and François Chaumette played a proletarian. The film has been characterized as a surrealist work on "the usury of words," which is curious, as it is also said to have been a silent film. Resnais maintains that both prints are lost. One recalls that François Truffaut said the same thing about his very first film, a silent, also vaguely surreal short made in 1955 with the title *Une Visite*, a film which Resnais in fact edited and Jacques Rivette photographed. While most source books on Truffaut continue to cite this as lost, apparently two years prior to his death Truffaut had the 16mm print blown up to 35mm and showed it to friends.

SALVADOR DALI—Between the years 1954 to 1961, Dali, along with his associate/secretary Robert Descharnes, wrote and directed a film entitled *L'Aventure prodigieuse de la Dentellière et du Rhinocérous* (*The Stupendous Story of the Lacemaker and the Rhinoceros*). The film is based upon Dali's theory of the relationship of spirals between objects, specifically between the "logarithmic curves" of Vermeer's *The Lacemaker* and the natural spirals found on rhinoceros horns (a subject treated by Dali on canvas as well), ultimately exploring the opposition of bestiality and grace. While Descharnes has for many years now brought forth numerous texts and monographs on Dali and even, in 1978, a 20-minute film of his own entitled *Million and One Visions of Salvador Dali*, he has yet to release this work, which was edited but never shown.

RAINER WERNER FASSBINDER—*This Night* (1966/5 minutes) was apparently Fassbinder's true first film, shot in 8mm, prior to *The City Tramp*, which was made later that year. Fassbinder submitted it as part of his application to the German Film and Television Academy in Berlin. He was turned down for admission and the film is now lost.

PIER PAOLO PASOLINI—Over the years, as part of his cinematic practice when researching a new project, Pasolini would, from time to time, produce documentary essays on his formative thought and selection process. Akin to studies a painter might sketch prior to undertaking a larger canvas, Pasolini's "notebook" films, *Sopraluoghi in Palestina* (about the search for locations for *The Gospel According to St. Matthew*) and *Notes for a Film on India* and *Notes for an African Orestes* (both studies for unrealized films) are themselves thoroughly engaging *repérages* upon Pasolini's creative method, wide-ranging in observation, replete with visual and oral polemic. In 1970, during a city-wide sanitation strike in Rome, Pasolini shot a documentary which he had intended to title *Notes for a Novel on Garbage*. Produced for inclusion in a collective documentary by the Committee of Italian Filmmakers Against Repression, the film was never edited and is seemingly lost.

ALEXANDRO JODOROWSKY—During the 1950s, years prior to making his seldom seen first feature *Fando et Lis* (1968) and his cult classic *El Topo* (1971), Chilean-born filmmaker Jodorowsky shot a 40-minute 16mm film in Paris, *The Severed Heads*, based on the novel by Thomas Mann. "It's the story of a woman who has an intellectual husband, very physically soft. She also has an idiot lover but very strong. She cuts their heads

off and interchanges them. She stays with the muscled body and the intellectual head. But, after a while, the body of the athlete weakens and the body of the intellectual becomes vigorous and muscular. Thomas Mann wished to say that it is the intellect which makes the body," states Jodorowsky. Jean Cocteau so liked the film, which was performed in pantomime, that he wrote a prologue for it. The film received the first prize at an amateur cinema festival in Rome, but all copies have since been lost.

GLAUBER ROCHA—During his years of self-imposed exile from Brazil, during which time he directed feature films in Africa, Spain, Cuba, and Italy, Glauber Rocha also paid a visit to Chile during the period of Allende. In 1971 he began shooting in Santiago, mixing documentary and dramatized sequences on the subject of Brazilians exiled in Chile for a feature film entitled *Definicão ou estrela do sol*. The filming was stopped before completion and the negative of the footage was withheld by the Italian laboratory because of the financial problems of the film's producers, Renzo Rossellini and Chilean National TV. The footage has been missing since then.

THEO ANGELOPOULOS—In 1983 Angelopoulos was invited to make a short film for the Greek Public Television Network about a village in Macedonia populated by only one inhabitant. According to Angelopoulos, "We finished shooting in a day and [laughing] the film ends with the village's last inhabitant abandoning it, too. He is by himself, he is talking about his story, we see the half-demolished village, then him as he is putting his things on the mule, his television set, and leaves for the city to go find his children." (Quoted in *Periodiko* 39 [Aug. 1989].) The film disappeared within the TV network, although Angelopoulos re-enacted motifs from this work in his subsequent film, *Voyage to Cythera*.

CHANTAL AKERMAN—In 1984 Chantal Akerman shot a 35mm black-and-white short film to be titled *New York, New York Bis*, now listed on her filmography as lost. In the film, a woman (Akerman) arrives at an apartment in New York and rings the buzzer. "It's me, Chantal." An unseen person lets her in, but when she enters the apartment her friend will not come out of the room to greet her, continuing simply to practice the violin. The woman waits, decides to take a bath, and eventually jumps out the window. The footage was taken to Paris for editing, and during a period of a few weeks when Akerman was ill she discovered that the material had disappeared from the editing room, perhaps thrown out, perhaps taken by mistake. Only one roll of negative remains of three, Akerman having shot an economical 1:1 shooting ratio. Proof once again that that which we call the present possesses as much fragility as the so-called past, and that the disappearance of things is as much a part of the manufacture of history as the occasional herald and magic of those words "discovery" and "revival."

John Gianvito is Associate Curator of the Harvard Film Archive.

Notes

You are invited to visit the *Film Quarterly* web site at http://www.ucpress.edu/journals/fq/filmslost to connect with the author about these films, or to post information about missing films you'd like to track down.

1. Susan Sontag, "The Decay of Cinema," *New York Times Magazine*, February 25, 1996, p. 60.
2. For further details of this story see Christopher Rawlence, *The Missing Reel—The Untold Story of the Lost Inventor of Motion Pictures* (London: Collins, 1990).

David Robinson

Return of the Phantom

Even though it may be forgivable to mislay the odd *Phantom of the Opera* here and there, given the number of versions and variants, that can hardly explain or excuse the half-century eclipse of Maxu Weibang's *Midnight Song* (*Yeban gesheng*), made at United China Pictures in Shanghai in 1936. The film (and its 1941 sequel) surfaced in Europe last year at the Udine Far East Film Festival, to be revealed as arguably the most fascinating and creative of all interpretations of Gaston Leroux's horrid tale. Along with the film comes the rediscovery of the dark, original talent of actor-director-designer Maxu, a name which figures in none of the authorized histories of Chinese film, though Stephen Teo's recent *Hong Kong Cinema, The Extra Dimensions* discusses the filmmaker's later career in the former colony.

Very little is known about Maxu's life. He was born in 1905 in Hangzhou, in Zhejiang Province. His parents died when he was young, which is said to be the reason why he added his wife's family name Ma to his original name of Xu. He graduated from the Shanghai School of Fine Arts and after a period as an assistant teacher, was taken on by the Mingxing Studios. Like Alfred Hitchcock, he progressed from designing title cards to full-fledged art direction.

He soon gave up designing for acting, playing his first role in Zhang Shichuan's *The Marriage Trap* (*You hun*, 1924) at age 19. An unidentified critic writing in 1942 recalled that his talent as an actor

> lay in his extraordinary ability to embody the character he was playing, using every word and action to express complex moods. None of his peers could match his portrayal of a character's deepest emotions. . . . Maxu Weibang would go to tremendous pains to think through even the tiniest gesture, to find the best way to move people, and in doing so to add to the power of a film. His style of working was to be consistently sincere and honest.

The same writer described him as "a kind, tolerant-looking man with a long, angular face." He had an exceptionally large forehead: "From time to time he would play an artist or scholar, not just because of their closeness to his own nature, but also because he naturally looked the part: an artist with a somewhat scholarly demeanour."

At 21, Maxu had the opportunity to direct his first film, *The Love Freak* (*Qing chang guairen*, 1926)—apparently not a great success—at the Langhua Film Company. Returning to Mingxing when Langhua closed down, he was assistant director on *Love and Gold* (*Aiqing yu huangjin*, 1926), directed by Zhang Shichuan, for whom he had worked several times as an actor. He was definitively established as a director in his own right in 1928, and the titles of at least five further silent films are recorded: *Freak in the Night* (*Helye guairen*, 1928); *Devil Incarnate* (*Hunshi mowang*, 1929); *The Cry of Apes in a Deserted Valley* (*Kong gu yuan sheng*, 1930); *Pear Blossom in the Storm* (*Baoyu lihua*, 1934); and *Prison of Love* (*Ai yu*, 1934).

Of these the only film known to survive, *The Cry of Apes in a Deserted Valley*, appeared at a recent Pordenone Festival. It is a pretty silly thriller in which Lily, the beautiful daughter of an engineering works manager, is apparently carried off by a gorilla. Investigation reveals that Lily's captor is in fact a man disguised as a gorilla who is abducting young girls to be sold for rejuvenation experiments. (In the late 1920s rejuvenation and "monkey-glands" provided the same kind of thrill for tabloid-science as Viagra does today.) For all the shortcomings of the plot, the characters are vividly developed, and the villain's underground lair is quite a stylish piece of design. Moreover, the 25-year-old Maxu, lean and handsome in a sinister way, appears as an actor, playing a lurking, mysterious stranger who in the last reel turns out to be the great detective who finally brings the gorilla-man to justice.

After a first experiment with sound, *A Goose Alights on the Wintry River* (*Han jiang luo yan*, 1935), Maxu

Midnight Song: the Phantom

Lon Chaney: Phantom makeup

made his undoubted masterpiece, *Midnight Song*. The film opens in *Old Dark House*-style with the arrival of a bedraggled touring opera company at a dilapidated theater guarded by a crazy, cackling old hunchback caretaker. They learn that the theater has been empty and crumbling since the apparent death there of the great opera star Song Danping, ten years before.

The company clean up the theater and embark on rehearsals, but the young star has trouble with his songs and stays behind to rehearse after the rest have left. Alone in the theater, he is alarmed to hear a beautiful voice, which guides him through his song. It is of course Song Danping, who thereupon appears in person to relate his story in flashback. He was in love with the daughter of a rich and powerful feudal lord, who punished him for this presumption by having him beaten and horribly disfigured. Since then he has hidden in the theater, waiting for a singer who can take over his artistic mantle. The young newcomer is chosen, and entrusted with the manuscript of Song Danping's operatic chef d'oeuvre. He is also required to be envoy to Song Danping's former love, Li Xiaoxia, whose mind has broken from sorrow.

The major departure from Leroux and other film adaptations is that the Phantom is the unequivocal protagonist, and wholly benevolent, even though at the end he becomes the instrument of killing his old malefactor when the feudal lord menaces the young singer and his fiancée. This is in marked contrast to the conventions of Western horror films, which invariably marginalize their monsters, however sympathetic, generally pivoting the plot on a decorative romantic duo.

In Leroux, the Phantom's protégée is a female singer, and the Phantom is provoked to lethal sexual jealousy of her fiancé. Maxu develops much more complex and ambiguous relationships by making the protégé male. The hallucinating Li Xiaoxia believes the young man to be Song Danping himself, and fascination and delight begin to heal her tormented mind. Song Danping is perfectly content to place the young man in this beneficent role of surrogate, and his distress when he discovers that the young man has a fiancée is a kind of jealousy on behalf of Li Xiaoxia, a strange and subtle anxiety about the boy's commitment to his go-between role.

The expressionist settings, presumably the work of Maxu himself, are richly atmospheric. Clearly he had seen the James Whale films, but the German Expressionists are still quite evidently a much stronger influence on the lighting, use of shadows, and sinister chiaroscuro. Maxu is a master of mise-en-scène and suspense: most notable is the scene when the bandages

are finally removed from the Phantom, whose head is out of shot, below the frame line. The doctor slowly unwinds the bandages as Song Danping's loving mother and sister watch with eager expectation, and the spectator waits with growing anxiety, anticipating the shock of the exposure of the face—which indeed sends them reeling across the room.

Other factors enrich the film. Maxu was, by all accounts, a highly politicized person, deeply and personally affected—to a degree of permanent melancholy—by China's decades of trauma. (The film was released in February 1937, only months before the Japanese bombing of Shanghai effectively closed down film production there.) Song Danping is portrayed as a fugitive revolutionary, using the theater as sanctuary, and the characterization of the evil feudal lord has clear references to the chaotic political struggles of the 1920s.

Part of the film's huge success on its first release was due to the songs, at least one of which has remained a favourite long after the film itself has been forgotten. The lyrics were by Tian Han (a left-wing writer who at the time was under house arrest by the Kuomintang), who also helped revise the script to strengthen its nationalist and anti-feudal sentiments. At Tian's suggestion, the composer was Xian Xinghai, who deliberately combined elements of popular and folk song with idioms of both Western and traditional Chinese opera.

The incidental music is another matter, and a cause for some anxiety for modern European viewers. It is a compilation in the manner of a silent film score, recklessly juxtaposing popular classics, from "Night on Bare Mountain" to "Orpheus in the Underworld," Handel's "Largo," and "Rhapsody in Blue." It is not easy for the contemporary spectator to make the adjustment necessary to gauge the effect of these (essentially skilfully chosen) melodies upon a Chinese public, to whom in 1937 they were still quite unfamiliar.

The film's enormous commercial success launched the star career of its leading actor Jin Shan, created a long-lasting vogue for horror films, and firmly typed Maxu as a genre director. His next four films included *Tales of a Corpse-Ridden Old House* (*Gu wu Xing shi ji*, 1938) and *Leper Woman* (*Mafeng nü*, 1939). Then in 1941 he decided, or was pressed, to make a sequel to *Midnight Song*.

Even if *Midnight Song II* (*Yeban gesheng xuji*), with an entirely new cast, has not the quality of its predecessor, it is still the work of an artist of exceptional fantasy and visual gifts. It opens with the funeral of the young singer's fiancée, shot by the evil lord at the climax of the original film. After the funeral the singer leaves the opera troupe—whom we see being harassed by unidentified occupation troops—to go and fight with the Nationalist army. Meanwhile, the wandering Song Danping is reunited with his little sister, now grown up. In the flashbacks to which Maxu was by this time chronically addicted, Song Danping relates his story. At the end of the original *Midnight Song*, he was last seen trapped at the top of a tower, which had been fired by an angry mob. He explains that he had leapt into the sea below and been rescued by sailors.

More bizarrely, he recounts how his appearance, though still monstrous, has been changed in the meantime. This sequence gives an insight into Maxu's obsessive visual preoccupations. From the sketchy biographical information available, we learn that he was passionate in his study of makeup, and would spend hours trying out different opera makeups on his own face. It is tempting to guess that between 1937 and 1941 he had seen Rupert Julian's 1925 version of *The Phantom of the Opera*, and had preferred Lon Chaney's death's-head makeup to the rather more scrofulous face he had designed for *Midnight Song*. To justify making this change without breaching the story logic linking the two films, he devised a strange subplot in which the Phantom is taken up by a crazy old doctor who rushes about like La Fée Carabosse, with a goblin nose, vampire teeth, and Quasimodo hump. The doctor and his assistants perform an elaborate operation in a Frankenstein-like laboratory. The hands come out all right, but when the face is unwrapped, the doctor's assistants recoil at the disaster: far from improved, the face has been transformed to the Lon Chaney pattern.

Maxu introduces another outrageous narrative convenience later in the film. Song Danping's tragic lover Li Xiaoxia has lain sick and delirious in her bed throughout the film, and in the final reel suffers the additional affliction of blindness. It is at this moment that the young singer reappears with his Nationalist troops, to rout the invaders and effect a meeting between the two one-time lovers. Now blind, the lady of course remains blissfully unaware of the disfigurement of her long-lost love, and dies happy, while the Phantom, precluding all further sequels, takes his life with a poisoned dart purloined from the crazy old doctor. The film ends, as it began, with a funeral—this time a double one. The manipulation may be blatant, but it works infallibly: there were few dry eyes at the Udine screening.

Despite such evident mechanics (not to speak of the music, which this time adds the "Pathétique" to the repertory), Maxu's soaring imagination and vision remain supreme. In *Midnight Song II* the influence of James Whale is more apparent: a scene where the Phan-

Leslie Cheung in the 1995 remake, *The Phantom Lover*

tom comes upon a crowd of villagers listening to a professional storyteller has something of the look of Hollywood Transylvania, but this, and some exotic mountain scenes, apparently done on location, have a grandeur and painterly style that the Universal stages could not rival. Nor is there anything in Whale to match Maxu's moments of romantic madness, which rather bring to mind the Buñuel of *Abismos de Pasión.*

In his eight remaining years in Shanghai, Maxu made ten more films, and in 1949 moved to Hong Kong, where he was to make twelve more. Of all this output, his first Hong Kong production appears to be the only film at present available for viewing, although the others may still be lingering in video catalogues. *The Haunted House* or *A Maid's Bitter Story* (*Quionglou hen*, 1949) (regarded by Stephen Teo as Maxu's "Hong Kong masterpiece") intermittently retrieves the old fantasy and expressionist imagery, and there is a throwback to *Midnight Song* in the story of a tyrannical old parent (an Emil Jannings-style performance) who disfigures the disapproved lover of his daughter, driving her to suicide. Facial disfigurement clearly remained a special preoccupation: it had also featured in *Autumn Begonia* (*Qiu haitang*, 2 parts, 1943), which for Julien Carbon represents Maxu's unqualified masterpiece. Although his career seems to have declined following the commercial failure of the high-budget *The Haunted House* and his subsequent three-year withdrawal from production, Maxu continued to work regularly (on films whose titles admittedly included *Resurrected Rose* and *Booze, Boobs and Bucks*) from 1954 to 1961, when he died after being knocked down by a car.

Not everyone forgot *Midnight Song*. In 1962, Maxu's former assistant Yuen Chiu-feng remade it for Shaw Brothers, as *Mid-Nightmare*—this time to feature a woman star, Le Ti. In 1995, Ronnie Yu directed a new version as a vehicle for Leslie Cheung, with the title *The Phantom Lover.* It is a spectacularly lavish and handsome production, though one yearns for Maxu's eerie chiaroscuro, and the story does not benefit from the over-elaboration involving the heroine's forced betrothal. Most fatally, the operatic *Romeo and Juliet* that is supposed to be Song Danping's masterwork sounds as if it was concocted of numbers rejected from Cliff Richards' *Heathcliff.* It is a far, far cry from the haunting songs of Xian Xinghai.

David Robinson is a film historian with a special interest in pre-cinema history and silent cinema. He is the former film critic of the London *Times*, and the present director of the Pordenone Silent Film Festival.

Review

The Apple

Director: Samira Makhmalbaf. Producers: Marin Karmitz, Véronique Cayla, Iraj Sarbaz. Writer/Editor: Mohsen Makhmalbaf. Cinematographers: Ebrahim Ghafori, Mohamed Ahmadi. New Yorker Films.

Few films these days are simple in a nonpejorative sense, relying on a straightforward narrative structure presented with economy of means. Of all the selections at the 1998 New York Film Festival, *The Apple* was by those standards the simplest; yet only a little probing will reveal underlying issues of considerable complexity.

The narrative derives from a real-life incident: An elderly man and his blind younger wife have kept their 11-year-old twin daughters, Massoumeh and Zahra, shut up in their house since birth. (The wife, too, rarely goes out.) Neighbors complain to the Social Services authorities, who bring the girls in to be examined and then let them go home on the condition that they be allowed out. When a visiting social worker finds the girls still kept inside, she releases them, and on the second occasion also locks the father in for a time. At first the girls are afraid of their freedom; they also have no knowledge of outside life, assuming (for example) that a street vendor is simply giving away his ice cream. But they begin to learn from other children they meet: a boy at an upstairs window teasing them with an apple on a string and then taking them to a fruit store; two girls playing hopscotch in a park. At the end the father appears to accept his daughters' freedom as he joins them for a walk outside, and the mother goes out far enough to encounter the boy with the apple.

The most general issue raised here is cultural: To what extent can a viewer understand a film in an unfamiliar language from an unfamiliar society? The problem becomes acute with a country that differs from ours in politics and religion as sharply as does Iran. (My own knowledge is based precariously on some 30 Iranian films and miscellaneous reading.) And with a film as simple as *The Apple*, non-Iranian viewers may believe they understand elements that in fact they are misinterpreting.

That cultural difficulty extends into another issue: How much "reality" is there in a film based on a real-life incident? Whereas Iranian viewers were likely to know both the facts of the case (which was covered in their media) and the plausibility of certain incidents, most of us start from scratch. Some internal evidence (notably the writing credit) suggests that incidents were changed or added— but which? It struck me, for example, that the social worker's locking in of the father was astonishingly interventionist, but I could not judge its plausibility. Only by interviewing Samira Makhmalbaf did I learn that it was fictional.

Fidelity to the facts, however, is not the heart of the issue. Can a fictional film based on a real situation ever offer more than a false promise of being "true to life," or can it retain some extrafictional value?

The Apple takes an unusual approach to its reconstruction. All of the main characters—father, mother, twins, and social worker—are "played" by their real-life counterparts. The only recent film I know of that uses the same strategy also comes from Iran: Kiarostami's *Close-Up*, about a movie buff who posed as Mohsen Makhmalbaf (Samira's father). Yet in *The Apple* the strategy gains even more immediacy, partly because it enters deeply into a family's emotional life and partly because Samira Makhmalbaf began filming only four days after the twins were taken to the welfare center, at a time when the parents' resentment at the bad publicity was still burning and the twins had scarcely begun to taste their new freedom. The film was shot in sequence, Makhmalbaf told me, and as far as the twins were concerned, "This is documentary, not fiction. I didn't direct them to do anything they couldn't do. For example, people ask me, How could these girls play hopscotch so soon after coming out? Well, I shot for only eleven days, so it's a first time for nearly everything they do. Hopscotch was on the eighth day, and it was their first reaction to it."

The third issue concerns Makhmalbaf herself. Only 17 when she made the film, she lives in a society that generally considers youth and femaleness unsuitable for positions of responsibility and respect. True, she had already made two short films and served as an assistant on her father's full-length *The Silence*. On the other hand, not only did her father give her entree into the world of filmmaking but his credits on *The Apple* might suggest an even larger role in its making.

Ironically, it was Makhmalbaf's youth and gender that lay behind both the decision to make the film and the real-life family's willingness to take part in it. "When I saw the events on TV, I couldn't stop thinking about it," she said. "I could put myself in the girls' situation— I was a girl, and I was in that culture, it could have been me or my sister, and I wanted to help them. And another

The twin girls, Massoumeh and Zahra

reason was I was interested in sociology, and I wanted to know what would happen to the two girls, how they would communicate with the outside world, what would be their reactions." As for persuading the family to take part, she knew that this meant persuading the father, whom she saw at the Social Services center after the twins were taken there. "I thought that it would be hard for him to communicate with a woman, a girl. So I just listened to him, I didn't judge him, I just wanted to know his reasons, instead of condemning him like everyone else. So I think he trusted me. And I never asked him, Let me come to your home, I want to make a film— he just took me there, and started telling me about his life. It was very simple. And I was fond of him."

Makhmalbaf was in sole charge of the filming. As for her father's script: "I didn't want to have a script before meeting the family, I wanted to keep my eyes and ears open before using my imagination about it. After the shooting started, every night, my father and I had some kind of conversation together, and had an idea. Then my father threw out some kind of note about it, not the details, not the dialogue; so the whole script wasn't finished until after the shooting. For example, on the first day of shooting I went to the Social Services and found the father and mother and the social worker all worrying about the girls' future, but the girls were enjoying their life there, they had some apples and were tasting them. So I talked with my father about it and he found this metaphor about Adam and Eve and the apple, so in the film the apple means the knowledge and enjoyment of life."

While that metaphor recurs openly with the boy dangling the apple, first over the twins and at the end over the mother, who finally grasps it, the idea that knowledge and freedom go together is absorbed into the film's entire fabric. *The Apple* consists of a progression (reinforced by shooting in sequence) from enclosure to open space, from restriction to tolerance, not just for the twins but also—as at the end the father walks out with them and the mother emerges more tentatively—with the implicit hope it will come for everyone.

Makhmalbaf sets that theme in the opening shot, a medium close-up of a potted plant against a sunlit wall. A hand holding a pot enters the frame above right and begins to tip water onto the plant. A pan and upward tilt reveals that the hand belongs to Massoumeh, who stands behind a locked metal gate with her arm stretched out and down between the bars. The plant lives in sunlight and open air; the girl does not.

The twins go through more than one stage toward freedom. The gated house door opens onto a small garden surrounded by high walls, and a locked door in the facing wall leads to an alley. Only beyond the alley does the wider world begin. When the social worker first opens the gate and the garden door, the twins stay in the garden. Then she ushers them out, but they stay close by in the alley. It is the boy with the apple who leads them farther away. Then they discover the park—their first truly open space—and two girls who play with them and teach them hopscotch (which reflects their progressive "leaps" toward freedom).

When the social worker locks the father inside the house, she gives him a hacksaw and tells him he has to cut his way out. But the point is not just to make him experience what it's like to be locked in. Before he has gotten very far with his sawing, she returns with the twins and gives them the key. If they can unlock the door, she says, he will be free. After several attempts, Massoumeh turns the key. Her knowledge is his freedom.

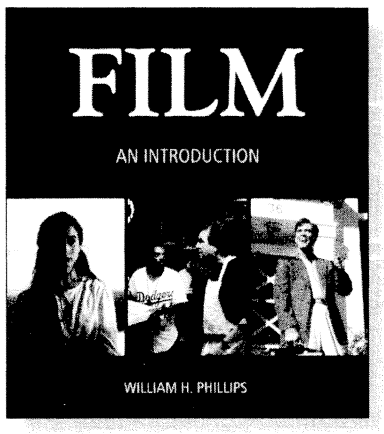
Near the end of the film, the twins are fascinated by a street vendor's wares. They go home and ask their father to come back with them and buy them a watch. To their new knowledge of space they want to add knowledge of time.

The fictional elements in the film (notably the boy with the apple and the social worker's actions) intensify the implicit theme of progressive freedom and knowledge. By highlighting the symbolism, however, I have probably made it seem obtrusive, which in context it is not. In viewing the film, it is almost impossible to doubt that the twins are genuinely naive and barely able to speak. When they try to grab the dangled apple, they are clearly enjoying a game; when Massoumeh annoys one of the friends by suddenly tapping her on the forehead with an apple, and then makes up by giving it to her, the incident looks as unscripted as it actually was. With the adults, Makhmalbaf simply explained the situation and let them find their own words. "For example," she told me, "I'd listened to the father and I knew what would be his reaction to certain questions. I was waiting for the dialogue I wanted him to say but I didn't dictate it. Because I can't, even the best writer can't know what this real mother and father are going to say." Even the fictional elements had to reflect the temperaments and attitudes of the real-life participants. As Makhmalbaf said of the social worker's fictional locking up of the father, "It was something that suited her character, something she would like to do."

There is no fracture in *The Apple* between documentary and fiction. In one sense it is all fiction (except for the few scenes at the welfare center), since even the unscripted incidents were embedded in performances done for the camera. Yet in another and stronger sense it is all documentary, since the filmmaking itself was an integral part of the family's response to the twins' temporary removal. With Makhmalbaf's prompt start on the film, everything in it, scripted or not, records the family's real-life experience. But *The Apple* does not flaunt these complexities; it remains a simple film: touching, sometimes amusing, always engrossing.

William Johnson is the New York editor of *Film Quarterly*.

Featured Attraction



FILM
AN INTRODUCTION

William H. Phillips
University of Wisconsin — Eau Claire

1999/PAPER/600 PAGES
INSTRUCTOR'S MANUAL WITH TEST ITEM FILE
TEST ITEM FILE ON COMPUTER DISK
VIDEO LIBRARY
COMPANION WEB SITE:
www.bedfordstmartins.com/phillips-film

The most comprehensive and accessible text of its kind, *Film: An Introduction* combines the universal appeal of movies with the academic rigor instructors require. Written by a longtime teacher of the introductory course, the text examines a broad range of films for their social, political, and cultural content, as well as for their merits as an art form. *Film* contains over 500 images, including over 200 frame enlargements from films discussed.

"Film: An Introduction *strikes me as a considerable piece of work. It contains an enormous amount of information about the forms, techniques, styles, and 'grammar' of film — all of it well informed, simply and clearly stated. . . . This is clearly good teaching coming from a good teacher.*"
— Jack Ellis, *Northwestern University*

For Examination Copies:
1-800-446-8923
www.bedfordstmartins.com

BEDFORD
ST. MARTIN'S

Book Reviews

Documenting the Documentary

Close Readings of Documentary Film and Video

Edited by Barry Keith Grant and Jeanette Sloniowski.
Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1998. $27.50.

Documenting the Documentary contains 27 essays on nonfiction film. The book starts with discussions of various works of Flaherty, Vertov, Eisenstein, Buñuel, Basil Wright, and Riefenstahl; it dallies inter alia with *Night and Fog*, *Titicut Follies*, and *An American Family*; and for dessert it serves up mouth-watering goodies such as close readings of *Tongues Untied*, *Sherman's March*, and *Roger and Me*, and comments on the films of Michael Moore, Michael Rubbo, Stan Brakhage, Peter Watkins, and other members of documentary's Hall of Fame. In short, it seems to provide a cornucopia of devastating documentary delicacies.

It also comes trailing clouds of glory. Three luminaries whose scholarship I esteem seem to think it is the best thing since Hershey experimented with the chocolate bar. Quoted on the jacket of the book, John Corner from Liverpool University calls the volume "A fine collection of critical essays which will help consolidate documentary as a key area for media scholarship." John Hess from the University of Maryland thinks that the editors "have assembled a very fine collection, representing the best scholarly writing on documentary. . . . It will be a gold mine for teachers and students." Finally, Brian Winston comments that the book "offers a most useful overview of the traditional canon as well as a judicious account of newer films. . . . Just add viewing the films this book deals with to the excellent essays it contains and you could have yourself a whole documentary course." Words of praise indeed.

Well, for what it's worth, I beg to differ. Having myself edited a collection of documentary articles, I know how important the subject is, and how difficult the task of the editor. So I very much wanted this book to succeed. Unfortunately, it seems to me that its cumulative failings slightly outweigh its many virtues.

To start with, you will look in vain for an organizing structure. The editors state, rather ingenuously, that they decided to sacrifice the imposed organization of a sectional structure for the simpler arrangement of chronology. This way the readers can move around as they wish. What the editors are really saying is, "We had this bundle of assorted essays. We didn't quite know how to justify how and why they were chosen, so chronology was a good way out."

Luckily, or maybe not so luckily, Bill Nichols steps in to fill the breach. In a three-page foreword, he tells us that what we have here are "disciplined essays" that stem from and speak to the discipline of film studies, and that the essays represent a clear and compelling voice of film scholarship. When I hear the words "disciplined essays" I think of Charlton Heston heaving at his oar under the whip of the taskmaster in *Ben Hur*. In this case I would imagine the taskmaster to be faculty promotion boards. But the problem is not the word "discipline" but the phrase "the clear and compelling voice of film scholarship."

"The clear voice . . . " Come on, who's kidding whom? Half the essays are turgidly written in some kind of dense prose which sounds like German badly translated into English by a drunken Russian. And "the compelling voice" is about as attractive as a three-hour root canal. But the real problem lies in using the word "scholarship" in regard to a good number of the essays in the book. I always thought scholarship meant having a certain intellectual ability, having a sense of inquiry, an interest in the world, and a sense of history. Evidently I was wrong. As used in *Documenting the Documentary*, scholarship tends to means mouthing platitudes, stating the obvious, being concerned with minutiae, and living in a postmodernist, poststructuralist world without meaning.

In this world there are certain binding articles of faith that have to be repeated as mantras before you get down to work. These dogmas include such wisdoms as "all documentary is fiction"; "objectivity is nonsense"; "there is no truth in the referent"; "documentary uses narrative film techniques"; "strike a blow for freedom from the tyranny of meaning"; and "scientific history is an illusion. There are only discourses on history."

These tenets, which form the basis for so much that passes for documentary criticism today, have however come under severe attack, mainly from Noël Carroll and Carl Plantinga. Both have recently written absolutely clear and superb analyses of the problems of postmodernism and poststructuralism.[1] Carroll's essay, "Nonfiction Film and Postmodernist Skepticism," skewers most of the theories of Nichols, Winston, and Renov (today's key documentary gurus) with an intellectual lucidity and philosophic elegance that is absolutely convincing. Carl Plantinga then administers the coup-de-grâce in his essay, "Moving Pictures and the Rhetoric of Nonfiction Film," where he contributes to the attack on poststructuralism with a very thoughtful analysis of icons, indexing, and objectivity in documentary. To my mind at least, Carroll and Plantinga's combined and devastating onslaught leaves most current documentary theories and fads lying like bloated dead cattle scattered wildly on the distorted Daliesque landscape of modern critical studies. But of all this the book makes little mention.

After querying much of the underlying theoretical structure of Grant and Sloniowski's enterprise, what can one say about the collection itself? Separating the wheat from the chaff in *Documenting the Documentary* is an arduous process. The book leads off with a rather indifferent essay by William Rothman on *Nanook*, then flirts with some dense writing by Joanne Hershfield on *Que Viva Mexico!* before plunging into "The Dialectical Imperative of Luis Buñuel's *Las Hurdes*," by Vivian Sobchack. Gasping for breath, the reader

is then saved by a very fine and penetrating essay by Seth Feldman on Dziga Vertov's *The Man with a Movie Camera*. Above all, Feldman makes you see the film in a new way, offering you facts and observations on Vertov's politics and method of work that stimulate you to revisit the great man's oeuvre at length. Similarly, Frank Tomasulo's investigation into *Triumph of the Will* and the mass psychology of Fascism is a beautifully written, intelligent piece that will have the reader running to sip once more from Leni Riefenstahl's beautiful poisoned chalice. In his essay, Tomasulo calls upon William Reich to help him explore the nexus between ideology, psychology, and cinematic style in Riefenstahl's film. As a result we begin to understand the fascinating appeal of Fascism to the German *Volk* and to see how Riefenstahl's methods effectively pushed the spectator into the arms of the Nazis. This is the best writing on *Triumph of the Will* since Susan Sontag's "Fascinating Fascism."

After Tomasulo, the book becomes hard work, and two annoying tendencies occur again and again in the essays on display. The first is to deny the filmmaker any intelligence and to profess to know better than him or her what the film is about and why it was made. Thus Joan Nicks second-guesses what Mike Rubbo was up to in *Daisy*; and Lucy Fischer attributes strange layers of intention to Ross McElwee in *Sherman's March*.

Again, in a rather sensitive piece on Alain Resnais's *Night and Fog*, this wilful "I know better than the director" attitude blurs an otherwise interesting piece of writing by Sandy Flitterman-Lewis. The essayist calls Resnais's 1956 film one of the one of the earliest documentary films about the Holocaust. For years, this was the received gospel. But is it the total truth? The film is certainly about Auschwitz and its horrors, but the word "Jew" is only mentioned once, in passing. What many French scholars now accept is that *Night and Fog* was primarily intended by Resnais as a direct critique of France's practices in Algeria.

The worst offender, though, in this "know all" area is Jeanne Hall, who burdens Don Pennebaker with a systematic critique of traditional newsgathering practices. This she sees as the motivating force behind *Don't Look Back*, the filmmaker's look at Bob Dylan's 1965 English tour. Ms. Hall admits that Pennbaker doesn't privilege such a meaning. But Hall knows better. She knows that Pennebaker "cannot advertise, explicate, or even admit to having any hidden agenda. It wouldn't be in his interest to do so." Well, you pays your money and you takes your choice.

The second, and maybe more serious problem, is the sheer ignorance displayed by some authors regarding basic history and the social and political conditions prevailing at the time when the discussed films were made. Here the errors of William Guynn are reprehensible, but the errors of Jim Leach unpardonable. Most of Guynn's analysis of *Song of Ceylon* is actually fairly interesting. However, in his discussion of ideology, Guynn falls into all the time traps: "*Song of Ceylon*, through its idealization of Ceylonese life, belongs to the colonialist discourse that Edward Said calls Orientalism." Surprise, surprise! What on earth does one expect would be made by a 1930s Marketing Board still tied to the glorious concept of an Empire on which the sun never sets.

Jim Leach's essay on Humphrey Jennings and *Listen to Britain* falls into a similar trap of misunderstanding culture and history. Again and again the vision of "a people's war" is snidely criticized as being total myth. To support this view, Leach refers in his notes to Angus Calder's book *The People's War*. Having read the book, I would argue that Calder, although critical, does essentially believe in the unity idea. And having been raised in England during the war, I would say that the unity of the people was in fact a solid concept. This, maybe, is hard to grasp for anyone brought up in an America torn apart by the dissent over Vietnam, but the unity was there.

Possibly the most blatant of Leach's misinterpretations is his reading of the final scene, in which Elgar's music supports Britain's unofficial national anthem, "Land of Hope and Glory." For Leach, the song carries imperalist connotations, so beware. Obviously he was thinking of the words "Rule Britannia! Brittania rules the waves," which I will admit are a little bombastic. But surely the song is being used because of the force of the second line: "Britons never never never shall be slaves." In the context of a wartime Britain, facing a possible German invasion force only 21 miles away across the Channel, such words gave national courage in the face of a difficult dawn.

Luckily there are a number of essays in the book that bring a sigh of relief when all seems lost. Among the best of these are Carl Plantinga on *Spinal Tap*; Linda Williams on *The Thin Blue Line*; Sheila Petty on *Tongues Untied*; and Jeffrey Ruoff on style and narrative in *An American Family*. These essays appear on the scene much like the U.S. cavalry riding to the rescue.

Scott MacDonald's essay on Peter Watkins' *The Journey* also makes you sigh, but mainly for talent gone to waste. Watkins was one of the most wonderful, imaginative directors to come out of England in the 60s. In *Culloden* and *The War Game* he produced two of the most distinguished British docudramas of that era. They were not only important political films, but to young filmmakers like myself they were fantastic inspiration. After battles with the BBC over *The War Game*, Watkins went independent, and over the last 25 years has established a reputation as a paranoid media-hater and difficult filmmaker. Much of his work has been neglected, and one of MacDonald's objectives is to reestablish Watkins' reputation by illustrating the merits of the filmmaker's epic fourteen-and-a-half hour anti–nuclear film *The Journey*, shot in 1984–85.

In the first part of the essay, MacDonald illustrates the incredible production process required to set up this global film. He is a beautifully clear writer. He worked with Watkins on the project, knows the history of the film inside out, and this part of the essay is absolutely absorbing. He then does a brief but polished analysis of the film's structure, and describes Watkins' hopes that the film might change media simplicities and lead to a kind of passionate concerned global

cinema. There is only one problem, and hence the sigh. The film, in my opinion, is awful. Made with good intentions which one can only applaud, it strikes me as one of the most truly dreadful films ever inflicted on an unsuspecting audience. So, as with essays on the making of *Cleopatra*, we are left with a great piece of writing about an object of little value.

Thomas Waugh is also an excellent writer, and I would suggest that his essay on Joris Ivens' *The Spanish Earth* is the best in the book. Almost everything that would interest the inquiring reader is covered. Thus Waugh places the film within the context of the evolving documentary movement of the 30s. He gives us the full political, social, and artistic background to its conception. He pulls us into the debate of the left as to what film could and should do, and what narrative strategies should best be used for socialist film to reach the masses.

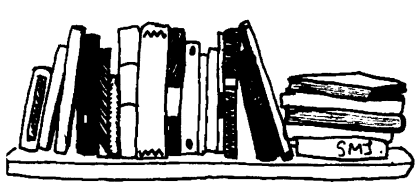
Waugh then takes us over to Spain and shows us how the film evolved under fire; how its strategies changed; how and why dramatization gradually took the place of straight documentary shooting. The description of the postproduction process is also riveting. We see Ivens and his editor Helen Van Dongen working together, and gradually begin to understand why they abandoned the Soviet-inspired shock editing strategies for a simpler narrative film language which would speak more directly to the audience. And thus the essay goes on intriguing us, opening our eyes and helping us see and become aware of what the film is about, what its place in film history is, and why it is important to the world.

Most of these questions seem to have lost their relevance in poststructuralist and postmodern criticism. Oscar Wilde once wrote that a cynic is one "who knows the price of everything and the value of nothing." In a similar way, one is tempted to say that "the modern critic is one who knows the trivia of every theory and the value of no film." Luckily, Waugh and a few others in this collection not only know the value of documentary but in the context of an increasingly dull critical scene can actually make us enjoy reading about film.

Alan Rosenthal is a filmmaker and writer living in Jerusalem; he is the editor of *New Challenges for Documentary*.

Note

1. Noël Carroll, "Nonfiction Film and Postmodernist Skepticism," in *Post-Theory*, ed. David Bordwell and Noël Carroll (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1996), 283-306. Carl Plantinga, "Moving Pictures and the Rhetoric of Nonfiction Film: Two Approaches," in *Post-Theory*, 307–24.



Refiguring American Film Genres

Theory and History

Edited by Nick Browne. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998. $40.00 cloth; $19.95 paper.

These are papers originally presented at a residential seminar on American Film Genres at the University of California at Irvine in 1992. In his preface, Nick Browne argues that they constitute "the reverse field of the formalist and structuralist undertaking." By that he means they emphasize a "cultural and historical interpretation of film genres" and a broadening of concern to include religion, law, war, civil rights, medicine, and diplomacy. But even with that emphasis, the specter of theory (with its perennial discontents) hovers over the volume, and at least two of the essays have little relation to broader questions of culture or history.

The term *genre* has long vexed students of the arts. The problem in criticism has always been to search for agreement about which elements or characteristics are essential to the category named—whether "idyll" or "melodrama," "epic" or "tragedy." As someone has said, "The field is littered with the ruins of past definitions which have convinced no one save the author." The essays in the present volume, ranging from solid empirical accounts of actual texts to relatively pure theorizing, face that dilemma.

Rick Altman, in "Reusable Packaging: Generic Products and the Recycling Process," makes a valiant effort, but has difficulty slogging through the morass. Instead of sweeping noted discrepancies among genres under the rug, he proposes to foreground them and "to explain what makes difference possible." A worthy project, but the essay ends with mixed results, perhaps because of its modus operandi—an appeal to linguistic morphology. The emergence of a genre occurs, Altman claims, when an adjective becomes nominalized: "epic poetry" becomes simply "the epic." Once that happens, we start extending the term from *The Iliad* to *War and Peace*, to *Alexander Nevsky*, and so on. In Altman's view, three conditions must be met for the full-fledged evolution of a genre: abandoning a simple add-on mentality ("let's just add the Western scene to this romance"); adding idiosyncratic attributes beyond the "eponymous material" (e.g., including melodramatic plots with villains, endangered women, etc.); and informing the public that a new exemplar has to be "filtered through the generic concept (character types, plot outcomes, production style)." But this formulation (if I understand it) seems circular: if "Western" evolves from a stripping away and realignment of elements that constitute, say, melodrama, isn't the new genre simply a renewal or permutation of some old synthesis?

Altman illustrates his essay on generic recycling with a discussion of the relation between the "woman's film" and the melodrama. The same subject is treated in a less schematic but more satisfying way by Linda Williams in "Melodrama Revised." Melodrama, she claims, is no mere genre: it is the "fundamental mode" of Hollywood films, a mode which "seeks dramatic revelation of moral and emotional truths

cinema. There is only one problem, and hence the sigh. The film, in my opinion, is awful. Made with good intentions which one can only applaud, it strikes me as one of the most truly dreadful films ever inflicted on an unsuspecting audience. So, as with essays on the making of *Cleopatra*, we are left with a great piece of writing about an object of little value.

Thomas Waugh is also an excellent writer, and I would suggest that his essay on Joris Ivens' *The Spanish Earth* is the best in the book. Almost everything that would interest the inquiring reader is covered. Thus Waugh places the film within the context of the evolving documentary movement of the 30s. He gives us the full political, social, and artistic background to its conception. He pulls us into the debate of the left as to what film could and should do, and what narrative strategies should best be used for socialist film to reach the masses.

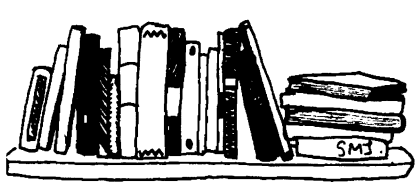
Waugh then takes us over to Spain and shows us how the film evolved under fire; how its strategies changed; how and why dramatization gradually took the place of straight documentary shooting. The description of the postproduction process is also riveting. We see Ivens and his editor Helen Van Dongen working together, and gradually begin to understand why they abandoned the Soviet-inspired shock editing strategies for a simpler narrative film language which would speak more directly to the audience. And thus the essay goes on intriguing us, opening our eyes and helping us see and become aware of what the film is about, what its place in film history is, and why it is important to the world.

Most of these questions seem to have lost their relevance in poststructuralist and postmodern criticism. Oscar Wilde once wrote that a cynic is one "who knows the price of everything and the value of nothing." In a similar way, one is tempted to say that "the modern critic is one who knows the trivia of every theory and the value of no film." Luckily, Waugh and a few others in this collection not only know the value of documentary but in the context of an increasingly dull critical scene can actually make us enjoy reading about film.

Alan Rosenthal is a filmmaker and writer living in Jerusalem; he is the editor of *New Challenges for Documentary*.

Note

1. Noël Carroll, "Nonfiction Film and Postmodernist Skepticism," in *Post-Theory*, ed. David Bordwell and Noël Carroll (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1996), 283-306. Carl Plantinga, "Moving Pictures and the Rhetoric of Nonfiction Film: Two Approaches," in *Post-Theory*, 307–24.



Refiguring American Film Genres

Theory and History

Edited by Nick Browne. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998. $40.00 cloth; $19.95 paper.

These are papers originally presented at a residential seminar on American Film Genres at the University of California at Irvine in 1992. In his preface, Nick Browne argues that they constitute "the reverse field of the formalist and structuralist undertaking." By that he means they emphasize a "cultural and historical interpretation of film genres" and a broadening of concern to include religion, law, war, civil rights, medicine, and diplomacy. But even with that emphasis, the specter of theory (with its perennial discontents) hovers over the volume, and at least two of the essays have little relation to broader questions of culture or history.

The term *genre* has long vexed students of the arts. The problem in criticism has always been to search for agreement about which elements or characteristics are essential to the category named—whether "idyll" or "melodrama," "epic" or "tragedy." As someone has said, "The field is littered with the ruins of past definitions which have convinced no one save the author." The essays in the present volume, ranging from solid empirical accounts of actual texts to relatively pure theorizing, face that dilemma.

Rick Altman, in "Reusable Packaging: Generic Products and the Recycling Process," makes a valiant effort, but has difficulty slogging through the morass. Instead of sweeping noted discrepancies among genres under the rug, he proposes to foreground them and "to explain what makes difference possible." A worthy project, but the essay ends with mixed results, perhaps because of its modus operandi—an appeal to linguistic morphology. The emergence of a genre occurs, Altman claims, when an adjective becomes nominalized: "epic poetry" becomes simply "the epic." Once that happens, we start extending the term from *The Iliad* to *War and Peace*, to *Alexander Nevsky*, and so on. In Altman's view, three conditions must be met for the full-fledged evolution of a genre: abandoning a simple add-on mentality ("let's just add the Western scene to this romance"); adding idiosyncratic attributes beyond the "eponymous material" (e.g., including melodramatic plots with villains, endangered women, etc.); and informing the public that a new exemplar has to be "filtered through the generic concept (character types, plot outcomes, production style)." But this formulation (if I understand it) seems circular: if "Western" evolves from a stripping away and realignment of elements that constitute, say, melodrama, isn't the new genre simply a renewal or permutation of some old synthesis?

Altman illustrates his essay on generic recycling with a discussion of the relation between the "woman's film" and the melodrama. The same subject is treated in a less schematic but more satisfying way by Linda Williams in "Melodrama Revised." Melodrama, she claims, is no mere genre: it is the "fundamental mode" of Hollywood films, a mode which "seeks dramatic revelation of moral and emotional truths

through a dialectic of pathos and action." This is a large claim, but Williams pursues it vigorously. She demonstrates that though the surface realism of cinema is quite at odds with nineteenth-century theatrical spectacles, its realistic effects "operate in the service of melodramatic *affects*," in particular those pertaining to "the virtues of beset victims" and their "staged innocence." Reasoning from the work of Christine Gledhill and Peter Brooks, she shows how films as diverse as *Way Down East*, *Rambo*, and *Schindler's List* exemplify her thesis.

In an essay concerned with hard facts rather than theorizing, Thomas Schatz's "World War II and the Hollywood 'War Film'" offers a straightforward history of Hollywood's wartime efforts. He accounts for the major films and how they got made, including statistics. The genres especially easy to mold to the war effort were musicals (*This Is the Army*, 1943) and women's pictures, which gave rise to a "family drama centering on a powerful wartime matriarch." What was new, however, and most important in Schatz's view, was the rise of the genuine combat film, beginning with *Wake Island* (1943). A fertile cross-pollination developed between the excellent military documentaries (Ford's *The Battle of Midway*, 1942; Wyler's *Memphis Belle*, 1944; Huston's *The Battle of San Pietro*, 1945) and the best of the "Class A" combat films—*Air Force* (1943), *Bataan* (1943), and *Sahara* (1943). A new level of realism was achieved: these films were "so downbeat in their portrayal of men at war and so sensitive to the psychological and physical trauma involved" that they could even be interpreted as antiwar rather than as celebratory of what "our boys" were doing over there. "From 1942 to 1945, Hollywood created a parallel universe for a nation at war, an odd amalgam of information and entertainment, of fact and propaganda, of realism and collective national fantasy." But the industry quickly reacted to the nation's weariness with war: in 1945, only 3 percent of total output was devoted to war films, and by 1947, only 0.5 percent.

In "Lounge Time: Postwar Crises and the Chronotope of Film Noir," Vivian Sobchack mixes a cocktail of Bakhtin and phenomenology to examine the premises of film noir—"premises" not in the logical sense (assumptions which lead to conclusions), but in the concrete real estate sense. Such premises include cocktail lounges, hotels, motels, bars, rooming houses, dance halls, roadhouses—indeed all those public places which operated as bleak surrogates of home for transients who could not go home again. Sobchack argues that these constitute the native locale for the film noir and derive from the dislocation of millions, soldiers and civilians, by the war. The impersonal public space is no mere metaphor for noir, but its metonymic (if hyperbolic) essence. She cites the example, already analyzed by Dean MacCannell, of *Shadow of a Doubt* (1943): "Compared to young Charlie, Uncle Charlie's soul has no abode, is not 'housed'; it lives in existential—and life-denying—negativity." The lounge is a chronotope (a place at a certain time) which is the dark counterpart of the chronotope of the idyll. Unlike the lucky characters who occupy the idyll of home, where meaningful work "elevates the quotidian into eventfulness," noir characters live in idleness: their's is the "idyll of the idle."

Michael Rogin's "'Democracy and Burnt Cork': The End of Blackface, the Beginning of Civil Rights" is an earlier draft of material incorporated in Rogin's important *Blackface, White Noise: Jewish Immigrants in the Hollywood Melting Pot* (1996). Rogin challenges the received wisdom that race was not a prominent subject matter in early and later talkies. It was early synthesized in that signature film so tantalizing to genre theorists, *The Jazz Singer* (1927). Jolson's film ideologically juxtaposed the genres of blackface comedy/musical and of generational conflict, especially as experienced by immigrants. These were to part company in the 1930s; generational conflict was substantially replaced by the "civil rights" genre, toward which Hollywood gently felt its way, given the realities of widespread anti-Semitism in America (*Crossfire* and *Gentleman's Agreement* appeared in 1947). But Rogin astutely finds a tie between the latter two genres: *The Jazz Singer* "displaced anti-Semitism in the wider society onto generational conflict within the Jewish family." Then, emboldened by the ideological deck-clearing of WWII, the moguls could venture forays at the real culprit. And then anti-black racism could become the next target, as in films like *Pinky* (1949).

Rogin provides a compact and complex history of the twists and turns of these genres and their relations to the politics of the era. Less complex, but no less interesting is George Lipsitz's "Genre Anxiety and Racial Representation in 1970s Cinema." Lipsitz neatly describes what happens to established genres when race gets mixed into the brew. "Anxiety" arises—that is, uncertainty and implicit, even unconsciously intended self-critique. Like Rogin, Lipsitz points out that race is already a constant in many genres, particularly those that "underscore . . . the heroism of white males by depicting them as defenders of women and children against predatory 'Indians,' Asians, Mexicans, and black people." Racial recasting does not necessarily change the equation: John Avildsen's *Lean on Me* (1989) has a slant not much different from *Birth of a Nation*. Ostensibly an example of the "high school disruption" genre, the film "solves" the problem of black adolescent chaos by means of masterful African-American male school principals wielding bullhorns and baseball bats. As Lipsitz puts it, "Patriarchal power [remains] the necessary cure for a wide range of black misbehavior." Unlike films that established the "high school disruption" genre such as *The Blackboard Jungle* (1955) or *To Sir With Love* (1967), let alone more redemptive films like *Stand and Deliver* (1987), *Lean on Me* "offers no critique of the broader social conditions that create disorder." Hence an unconsciously induced anxiety and an unconsidered unsettling of the genre itself.

Lipsitz finds a similar pattern in other black-oriented genre films. The 1972 racial send-up of Dracula, *Blacula*, also misses the opportunity to treat possible "white responsibility for black criminality . . . slipping back into an uneasy amalgam of standard horror film conventions and 1970s urban

black life." The inevitable conflict between the studios' conservative commercial needs and the social upheaval implicit in the potential of black power induces a generic "spasm." Lipsitz also recalls Poitier's black Western, *Buck and the Preacher* (1971), in which blacks trying to escape slavery by emigrating to the West are chased by white racist thugs in blue coats who try to force the wagon trains back to Louisiana. The black leader appeals to Native Americans, who turn him down, ignoring their common racial plight. Obviously this view of things must upset purist white devotees of the Western: the film undercuts the status of the Western "as a foundational story about origins in order to expose the contradictions it has always served to conceal."

The "reintegrating" in David J. Russell, "Monster Roundup: Reintegrating the Horror Genre," turns out to be taxonomizing once again, and so the article runs all the risks of such study, including the stimulation of one-upmanship. After faulting previous scholarly taxonomies (Everson, Noël Carroll, Robin Wood), Russell presumes to redefine horror movies as "monster movies." One immediately wonders what he will do with uncanny films like *The Shining* (1980), films that are very scary despite the absence of slimy or scaly flesh and antennae instead of eyes. The answer proves to be that "monster" refers not only to appearance but to behavior (psychology and morality) which is "monstrous." (But isn't that just hyperbole?)

Russell's three basic categories of monsters are the "real" (psychokillers, maniacs, stalkers, etc.), the "unreal" (vampires, ghosts, witches, etc.), and the "paranatural" (the products of "outer space, genetic mutations, bad science," etc.). From these he makes the claim that any cinematic spook can be analyzed as some combination of features from each group. The claim is supported by diagrams, whose overlap accommodates hybrids. (Having designed—and tediously defended—a number of such diagrams myself, I sympathize, but also warn about putting oneself and one's audience to sleep.) Russell makes a reasonable distinction between subjectivist and objectivist approaches to the horror genre: the first is based on the "emotional effects" experienced by the audience, the second seeks "clearly defined categories of iconography, content, or themes." But by so exclusively concentrating on the latter, becoming a sort of Linneus of the monster world, Russell cheats himself out of what seems the more interesting question: Why are audiences so taken with fiction-induced shivers?

The trial film is a genre only recently recognized, but clearly Carol J. Clover's "'God Bless Juries!'" already has a corner on the market. (Her article is also part a draft of a book-length project.) This effort shows genre criticism at its best, that is, at its most pragmatic. In research (a major virtue of Clover's presentation is its excellent documentation, especially of forgotten and obscure films) that goes back to the very first trial movie, *Falsely Accused* (1907), she finds the "terms" of the form "startlingly prefigured." *Falsely Accused* is not just a movie about a trial, but "a trial movie that spells out the natural fit between trials and movies." In a gesture that is the leitmotif of all future trial movies, the film juxtaposes the movie audience with the diegetic jury. This identification has flourished throughout the genre's history, most prominently in fictions and documentaries turning on the motif "you-are-the-jury, you-decide" (e.g., the last crawling title in *The Trial of Lee Harvey Oswald*, 1977). Camera angles and mise-en-scène in MGM's first all-talking picture, *The Trial of Mary Dugan* (1931), already established the pattern: the judge instructs the jury, in profile, but at the critical moment, when he says, "You are the sole judges of the facts in this case," he looks straight into the camera. We are translocated to the jury box.

Rather than trying to isolate a diverse congeries of features that establish genrehood, Clover picks one feature—the positioning of the theater audience in the jury box—and treats it as central. That enables her to explain the consistent avoidance of a visualization of members of the jury as a device for reserving a blank space in the setting from which we can register our verdict. This is the space of the "cipher jury." She illustrates this thesis with concrete discussions of well-known films like *Compulsion* (1959), *Presumed Innocent* (1990), and *Reversal of Fortune* (1990), and also faces squarely the challenge of counterexamples.

As one would expect, Leo Braudy's "The Genre of Nature: Ceremonies of Innocence" bears the authority of a seasoned literary and film theorist's erudition and scope. It also demonstrates the risks of genre theorizing. Braudy finds a common thread in many films of the last 20 years which conveys the public preoccupation, strong on both the left and the right, with "the potential corruption of what is assumed to be a natural human innocence." For example, the media are rife, in both factual and fictional narratives, with fears about the potential hazards posed to such "innocence" by science and technology. Braudy demonstrates that such a theme is widespread in even the most diverse Hollywood products. What is less clear is how this yearning for the innocence of "nature," however defined (and his postage-stamp account of the historical polysemy of the term is most impressive), qualifies as a genre as opposed to a motif, or theme, or just plain obsession. The title of the essay already indicates the tension: it proposes not the term "nature genre," but rather "genre of nature"—an odd usage meant perhaps to anticipate the questions that might arise with attempts to pin it down. Later in the essay, we meet a range of proffered synonyms that sustain our question: "'genre' of nature," "metagenre," "films of nature," "mode of nature," "the nature story." In other words, a reader looking to Braudy for a neat new compartment containing "a catalogue of recognizable motifs and themes" will be disappointed.

But Braudy may be on to something vulnerable about this traditional "container" sense of the term. Perhaps the way to come to terms with all the overlapping and blending that worry other contributors to this and similar volumes, is not to conceptualize genres *tout court*, but rather generic features floating in the popular imagination, features constantly engaged, like genes, in groupings, regroupings and composings of new forms, forms which reflect the concerns of the times. A feature kind of analysis is more flexible and

thus more useful than a taxonomic kind—since taxonomies always seem to instigate more epicyclical explanation than the system can bear, and ultimately spin out of control. Beyond the theoretical question which he thoughtfully raises, Braudy certainly documents the current American cinematic concern, even obsession, with "innocence." And his broad acquaintance with films (how could anyone see so many?) enables him to compile what would otherwise seem an unlikely list. These "ceremonies of innocence" are implicit in films as diverse as *The Last Wave*, *The Thing*, *Never Cry Wolf*, *Splash*, *Dragonslayer*, *Places in the Heart*, *Rambo*, *Star Wars*, *Jurassic Park*, *Terminator*, *Back to the Future*, *The Unforgiven*, *The Abyss*, and *Being There*. But instead of seeing the "genre of nature" as a generic "inflection" (or infiltration) of such genres as science fiction, horror, family-farm-in-danger, medieval fantasy, returned-veteran-action (etc.), maybe it would be more comfortable to treat it as a thematic strand, a free-floating ideological attitude of our time that may stick like Velcro to any accessible surface.

The quality of these essays is not in doubt, but for me the jury is still out on the viability of genre theory. The difficulty of drawing lines between the genres remains a vexing problem. A preoccupation with generic explanations of films is understandable, since they are so overwhelmingly designed for mass consumption. In the other arts, originality is chiefly prized and the constraints of genre are more often something to be escaped than embraced. Artistry can arise in film—if it *can* in fact arise—in the changes rung on an established product line. And as mass entertainment, the Hollywood film has proven more varied than others. In bullfighting, for instance, the bull must always die, but in a genre film, the villain may be allowed to live, or even to become the hero.

Nor can one can doubt the relevance of genre to explain widespread social and political currents. But, at least from the aesthetic point of view, preoccupation with genre seems at times excessive, and one wonders if other aspects of cinema aren't being short-changed, aspects of form and content about which such gifted authors as these would surely have much of importance to tell us. Why is it so hard to find in books on genre the celebration of particularly artful *cinema*, the way we would expect to find such celebration in books on Fellini or Bergman or Resnais?

Seymour Chatman is Professor Emeritus of Rhetoric and Film and Professor in the Graduate School at the University of California at Berkeley. He is the author of *Antonioni, Or the Surface of the World* (1985) and *Coming to Terms: The Rhetoric of Narrative in Fiction and Film* (1990).

Savage Cinema

Sam Peckinpah and the Rise of Ultraviolent Movies

By Stephen Prince. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998. $35.00 cloth; $18.95 paper.

Over the past decade the work of Sam Peckinpah has suffered from considerable neglect. Politically correct attitudes stereotyping the director as a purveyor of one-dimensional misogyny and re-evaluative approaches arguing for Peckinpah's inclusion in a canonical American literary "great tradition" both appear unsatisfactory. A more comprehensive cinematic, historical, and industrial treatment is required. Paul Seydor's detailed explorations of Peckinpah's montage techniques and Michael Bliss's close readings of the opening sequences in *Junior Bonner* and *The Getaway* aim at some degree of objective analysis. But biographical studies such as *Bloody Sam* and the ultraviolent excesses of contemporary Hollywood have hindered unbiased scholarly analysis. Most critics see a direct link between Peckinpah's notorious *Playboy* interview and the violently exploitative elements in the works of directors such as Oliver Stone, Quentin Tarantino, and Paul Verhoeven.

Stephen Prince's *Savage Cinema* is a positive correction to such misinterpretations. By following D.H. Lawrence's advice and trusting the text rather than Peckinpah's deliberately provocative statements and by showing how far contemporary Hollywood has misunderstood the work of a director whose violent imagery it has both used and abused, Prince has written an extremely cogent study which should lead to new and informed perspectives into Peckinpah's work. Seydor's book contains some relevant archival and historical features, but Prince has engaged in the first detailed study of the Peckinpah collection at the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences Margaret Herrick Library to support his case that Peckinpah was a critically intelligent observer of American society who was also disturbed by the images he created. By citing relevant examples from Peckinpah's unpublished correspondence, scripts, production memos, and editing notes, Prince provides insightful information on both the films and the historical context which informed them.

Savage Cinema contains five key chapters ("Peckinpah and the 1960s," "Aestheticizing Violence," "Melancholy and Mortality," "Interrogating Violence," and "A Disputed Legacy." In his introduction, Prince outlines his intention to examine "Peckinpah's use of cinema to inquire into the phenomenom of violence in human life and an analysis of the consequences of this inquiry for contemporary cinema" (xvi), and to concentrate on what he believes are the director's most significant works from 1968 (*The Wild Bunch*) to 1974 (*Bring Me the Head of Alfredo Garcia*).

The first chapter divorces Peckinpah from the derivative excesses of Tarantino and Verhoeven and places him within the context of the 1960s, an era which profoundly influenced his work (his position can be seen in his letter to

thus more useful than a taxonomic kind—since taxonomies always seem to instigate more epicyclical explanation than the system can bear, and ultimately spin out of control. Beyond the theoretical question which he thoughtfully raises, Braudy certainly documents the current American cinematic concern, even obsession, with "innocence." And his broad acquaintance with films (how could anyone see so many?) enables him to compile what would otherwise seem an unlikely list. These "ceremonies of innocence" are implicit in films as diverse as *The Last Wave*, *The Thing*, *Never Cry Wolf*, *Splash*, *Dragonslayer*, *Places in the Heart*, *Rambo*, *Star Wars*, *Jurassic Park*, *Terminator*, *Back to the Future*, *The Unforgiven*, *The Abyss*, and *Being There*. But instead of seeing the "genre of nature" as a generic "inflection" (or infiltration) of such genres as science fiction, horror, family-farm-in-danger, medieval fantasy, returned-veteran-action (etc.), maybe it would be more comfortable to treat it as a thematic strand, a free-floating ideological attitude of our time that may stick like Velcro to any accessible surface.

The quality of these essays is not in doubt, but for me the jury is still out on the viability of genre theory. The difficulty of drawing lines between the genres remains a vexing problem. A preoccupation with generic explanations of films is understandable, since they are so overwhelmingly designed for mass consumption. In the other arts, originality is chiefly prized and the constraints of genre are more often something to be escaped than embraced. Artistry can arise in film—if it *can* in fact arise—in the changes rung on an established product line. And as mass entertainment, the Hollywood film has proven more varied than others. In bullfighting, for instance, the bull must always die, but in a genre film, the villain may be allowed to live, or even to become the hero.

Nor can one can doubt the relevance of genre to explain widespread social and political currents. But, at least from the aesthetic point of view, preoccupation with genre seems at times excessive, and one wonders if other aspects of cinema aren't being short-changed, aspects of form and content about which such gifted authors as these would surely have much of importance to tell us. Why is it so hard to find in books on genre the celebration of particularly artful *cinema*, the way we would expect to find such celebration in books on Fellini or Bergman or Resnais?

Seymour Chatman is Professor Emeritus of Rhetoric and Film and Professor in the Graduate School at the University of California at Berkeley. He is the author of *Antonioni, Or the Surface of the World* (1985) and *Coming to Terms: The Rhetoric of Narrative in Fiction and Film* (1990).

Savage Cinema

Sam Peckinpah and the Rise of Ultraviolent Movies

By Stephen Prince. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998. $35.00 cloth; $18.95 paper.

Over the past decade the work of Sam Peckinpah has suffered from considerable neglect. Politically correct attitudes stereotyping the director as a purveyor of one-dimensional misogyny and re-evaluative approaches arguing for Peckinpah's inclusion in a canonical American literary "great tradition" both appear unsatisfactory. A more comprehensive cinematic, historical, and industrial treatment is required. Paul Seydor's detailed explorations of Peckinpah's montage techniques and Michael Bliss's close readings of the opening sequences in *Junior Bonner* and *The Getaway* aim at some degree of objective analysis. But biographical studies such as *Bloody Sam* and the ultraviolent excesses of contemporary Hollywood have hindered unbiased scholarly analysis. Most critics see a direct link between Peckinpah's notorious *Playboy* interview and the violently exploitative elements in the works of directors such as Oliver Stone, Quentin Tarantino, and Paul Verhoeven.

Stephen Prince's *Savage Cinema* is a positive correction to such misinterpretations. By following D.H. Lawrence's advice and trusting the text rather than Peckinpah's deliberately provocative statements and by showing how far contemporary Hollywood has misunderstood the work of a director whose violent imagery it has both used and abused, Prince has written an extremely cogent study which should lead to new and informed perspectives into Peckinpah's work. Seydor's book contains some relevant archival and historical features, but Prince has engaged in the first detailed study of the Peckinpah collection at the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences Margaret Herrick Library to support his case that Peckinpah was a critically intelligent observer of American society who was also disturbed by the images he created. By citing relevant examples from Peckinpah's unpublished correspondence, scripts, production memos, and editing notes, Prince provides insightful information on both the films and the historical context which informed them.

Savage Cinema contains five key chapters ("Peckinpah and the 1960s," "Aestheticizing Violence," "Melancholy and Mortality," "Interrogating Violence," and "A Disputed Legacy." In his introduction, Prince outlines his intention to examine "Peckinpah's use of cinema to inquire into the phenomenom of violence in human life and an analysis of the consequences of this inquiry for contemporary cinema" (xvi), and to concentrate on what he believes are the director's most significant works from 1968 (*The Wild Bunch*) to 1974 (*Bring Me the Head of Alfredo Garcia*).

The first chapter divorces Peckinpah from the derivative excesses of Tarantino and Verhoeven and places him within the context of the 1960s, an era which profoundly influenced his work (his position can be seen in his letter to

Nixon protesting the My Lai massacre). Dismissing fashionably superficial labels of "fascist" and "misogynist," Prince sees the director as a complex moralist who never had a "simple or single attitude toward anything in his films" (7), the best examples of which appeared in an era of sustained social ferment and turbulence. Prince aptly documents a historical era whose violent events made the creative achievements of *The Wild Bunch* possible.

Although Peckinpah attempted to use graphic screen violence to provoke his viewers, especially in depicting American institutional authority as corrupt and exploitative, his initial montage designs often had contradictory effects. The chapter dealing with Peckinpah's aesthetics of violence notes the link to the editing tradition earlier employed by Eisenstein, Kurosawa, and Penn, and details the director's particular use of slow-motion inserts, extended set pieces, and poetic and psychological montages in works such as *The Wild Bunch* and *Straw Dogs*.

One of the major distinctions of *Savage Cinema* is its detailed analysis of the notoriously difficult-to-watch *Straw Dogs* and the revelation of both the film's artistic complexity and its identification with the traumatized figure of Amy (Susan George) rather than her husband David (Dustin Hoffman). Prince reveals that *Straw Dogs* represented a turning point for Peckinpah. His sophisticated montage techniques totally avoided the danger of seducing viewers into enjoying violence (a danger he was unable to avoid in *The Wild Bunch*). Instead, *Straw Dogs* depicted violence as unpleasurable both for screen victim and audience. It not only led to Peckinpah's further attempts to use editing techniques to associate violence with melancholia and dehumanization but also to sequences in later films such as *Cross of Iron* showing "the response of the alienated self to conditions of trauma" (92).

Savage Cinema is an important book but, like all pioneering works, it demands further debate concerning several of its conclusions. The treatments of both *Cross of Iron* and *The Osterman Weekend* are relevant examples. Although Prince applauds certain features in these films, he also regards them as containing some regrettable vicarious spectacles of violence. However, critical interrogations of violence are not entirely absent from either. For instance, despite archival evidence documenting Peckinpah's attempts to make cinematic sense of Robert Ludlum's original novel, the contradictory behavior of Fassett in *The Osterman Weekend* may have its origins in Peckinpah's developed understanding of montage and violence (Fassett forgets his original goal and orders the assassination of John Tanner halfway throughout the film. The order does not make sense unless we understand that Fassett has been been carried away both by the violence of the sports game he is watching and the violence he has begun to initiate).

Finally, although Prince draws attention to the historical context influencing Peckinpah's work, he is oblivious to certain factors conditioning *Cross of Iron*. As Andrew Britton showed in his 1980/1981 *Movie* article "Sideshows: Hollywood in Vietnam," the film is really about the Viet Nam War; the final credit sequence thus works as an ironic Brechtian device relating the still from the My Lai massacre to other examples of historical atrocities. However, despite these reservations, *Savage Cinema* is a highly accomplished critical work which deserves serious study and further debate.

Tony Williams teaches in the English Department at Southern Illinois University.

Ziegfeld Girl

Image and Icon in Culture and Cinema

By Linda Mizejewski. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1999. $49.95 cloth; $17.95 paper.

In the extensive pre- and post-coverage by the E Network of the 1999 Golden Globe Awards ceremony, an odd exchange took place between a network reporter and two female stars of the ABC and Fox networks, Camryn Manheim ("The Practice") and Lucy Liu ("Ally McBeal"). Clearly elated by the awards garnered earlier in the evening by the shows on which they appear, the actresses playfully identified themselves to camera as "The Kelley girls—the Kelley whores." While it is certainly not surprising that middle-range stars or stars-in-the-making would seek to identify themselves with an industry insider (in this instance, David E. Kelley, the celebrated writer of both shows), Manheim and Liu did so in language that self-consciously referenced both the paradigm of the male author and an awareness of women's labor as a form of sexual service.

Linda Mizejewski's new book, the first major scholarly study of the Ziegfeld Girl in American culture, presents evidence to remind us that a moment such as this is not anomalous, but rather reflects longstanding cultural commitments to a gendered dynamic of starmaking. Mizejewski's trenchant argument explores the production of the Ziegfeld Girl through Florenz Ziegfeld's Zeigfeld Follies, as well as the impresario's earlier star-making ventures with Anna Held and the amplification of the Ziegfeld mythology through Hollywood cinema. The argument advanced is resonant and broad in scope; though the author concerns herself chiefly with "the Ziegfeld Era" (the first three decades of the twentieth century) she invites our scrutiny of the nostalgia for the sexual, racial, and class guarantees once incarnated by the Ziegfeld Girl.

Running through the book is a provocative and thoughtful argument about whiteness and its performativity in social context. The extended introduction makes a strong case for the ubiquity of the Ziegfeld Girl within American popular culture, and sheds light on the meaning of the Ziegfeld trademark, which conveyed a number of important assurances. At a time of vigorous social debates about what constituted appropriate femininity and exemplary Americanness, the Ziegfeld showgirl represented the newly public, yet highly codified female body, fully assimilated and safely white. She materialized the symbolic reconciliation of all the disparate

Nixon protesting the My Lai massacre). Dismissing fashionably superficial labels of "fascist" and "misogynist," Prince sees the director as a complex moralist who never had a "simple or single attitude toward anything in his films" (7), the best examples of which appeared in an era of sustained social ferment and turbulence. Prince aptly documents a historical era whose violent events made the creative achievements of *The Wild Bunch* possible.

Although Peckinpah attempted to use graphic screen violence to provoke his viewers, especially in depicting American institutional authority as corrupt and exploitative, his initial montage designs often had contradictory effects. The chapter dealing with Peckinpah's aesthetics of violence notes the link to the editing tradition earlier employed by Eisenstein, Kurosawa, and Penn, and details the director's particular use of slow-motion inserts, extended set pieces, and poetic and psychological montages in works such as *The Wild Bunch* and *Straw Dogs*.

One of the major distinctions of *Savage Cinema* is its detailed analysis of the notoriously difficult-to-watch *Straw Dogs* and the revelation of both the film's artistic complexity and its identification with the traumatized figure of Amy (Susan George) rather than her husband David (Dustin Hoffman). Prince reveals that *Straw Dogs* represented a turning point for Peckinpah. His sophisticated montage techniques totally avoided the danger of seducing viewers into enjoying violence (a danger he was unable to avoid in *The Wild Bunch*). Instead, *Straw Dogs* depicted violence as unpleasurable both for screen victim and audience. It not only led to Peckinpah's further attempts to use editing techniques to associate violence with melancholia and dehumanization but also to sequences in later films such as *Cross of Iron* showing "the response of the alienated self to conditions of trauma" (92).

Savage Cinema is an important book but, like all pioneering works, it demands further debate concerning several of its conclusions. The treatments of both *Cross of Iron* and *The Osterman Weekend* are relevant examples. Although Prince applauds certain features in these films, he also regards them as containing some regrettable vicarious spectacles of violence. However, critical interrogations of violence are not entirely absent from either. For instance, despite archival evidence documenting Peckinpah's attempts to make cinematic sense of Robert Ludlum's original novel, the contradictory behavior of Fassett in *The Osterman Weekend* may have its origins in Peckinpah's developed understanding of montage and violence (Fassett forgets his original goal and orders the assassination of John Tanner halfway throughout the film. The order does not make sense unless we understand that Fassett has been been carried away both by the violence of the sports game he is watching and the violence he has begun to initiate).

Finally, although Prince draws attention to the historical context influencing Peckinpah's work, he is oblivious to certain factors conditioning *Cross of Iron*. As Andrew Britton showed in his 1980/1981 *Movie* article "Sideshows: Hollywood in Vietnam," the film is really about the Viet Nam War; the final credit sequence thus works as an ironic Brechtian device relating the still from the My Lai massacre to other examples of historical atrocities. However, despite these reservations, *Savage Cinema* is a highly accomplished critical work which deserves serious study and further debate.

Tony Williams teaches in the English Department at Southern Illinois University.

Ziegfeld Girl

Image and Icon in Culture and Cinema

By Linda Mizejewski. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1999. $49.95 cloth; $17.95 paper.

In the extensive pre- and post-coverage by the E Network of the 1999 Golden Globe Awards ceremony, an odd exchange took place between a network reporter and two female stars of the ABC and Fox networks, Camryn Manheim ("The Practice") and Lucy Liu ("Ally McBeal"). Clearly elated by the awards garnered earlier in the evening by the shows on which they appear, the actresses playfully identified themselves to camera as "The Kelley girls—the Kelley whores." While it is certainly not surprising that middle-range stars or stars-in-the-making would seek to identify themselves with an industry insider (in this instance, David E. Kelley, the celebrated writer of both shows), Manheim and Liu did so in language that self-consciously referenced both the paradigm of the male author and an awareness of women's labor as a form of sexual service.

Linda Mizejewski's new book, the first major scholarly study of the Ziegfeld Girl in American culture, presents evidence to remind us that a moment such as this is not anomalous, but rather reflects longstanding cultural commitments to a gendered dynamic of starmaking. Mizejewski's trenchant argument explores the production of the Ziegfeld Girl through Florenz Ziegfeld's Zeigfeld Follies, as well as the impresario's earlier star-making ventures with Anna Held and the amplification of the Ziegfeld mythology through Hollywood cinema. The argument advanced is resonant and broad in scope; though the author concerns herself chiefly with "the Ziegfeld Era" (the first three decades of the twentieth century) she invites our scrutiny of the nostalgia for the sexual, racial, and class guarantees once incarnated by the Ziegfeld Girl.

Running through the book is a provocative and thoughtful argument about whiteness and its performativity in social context. The extended introduction makes a strong case for the ubiquity of the Ziegfeld Girl within American popular culture, and sheds light on the meaning of the Ziegfeld trademark, which conveyed a number of important assurances. At a time of vigorous social debates about what constituted appropriate femininity and exemplary Americanness, the Ziegfeld showgirl represented the newly public, yet highly codified female body, fully assimilated and safely white. She materialized the symbolic reconciliation of all the disparate

ingredients of American culture and the inevitable promotion of certain ethnic and national pedigrees deemed most valuable. Her contribution to indigenizing whiteness by establishing an American definition of the white female body and incarnating the sanitizing work of assimilation has up to this point received very little notice.

The mythologizing of Ziegfeld as showman validated the correctness of his choices while reinforcing apparently universal social consensus on beauty norms. By endowing him with selection criteria that were merely a function of his "genius" (ritualized in the famous "call from the dark" in which Ziegfeld, invisible at the back of the theater, approved a candidate for the Follies), accounts of Ziegfeld and his revues heightened the impression of democratic choice while repressing the actual race and class politics inherent in that selection. The end result was then presented through the prism of the male author as a mitigating strategy against the potential social challenges attached to the display of the public female body. By adhering to conventions such as the regimented "Ziegfeld walk," the performance of the Ziegfeld Girl reflected new imperatives to define and display a glamorous white female sexuality, yet it also indicated the public limits of such a performance.

In the first chapter, "Celebrity and Glamour: Anna Held," the author illustrates how Ziegfeld worked with a theatrical star import in a kind of warm-up to the operation that would develop its fullest mode of expression in the Ziegfeld Follies. Unlike the girls of the later Ziegfeld Follies (whose Americanization was complete from the time they entered the public eye), Held, who sustained a musical comedy career on Broadway and on tour from 1896 to 1912, embodied an ongoing tension between an exalted, fashionable Europe and a debased, sexualized Europe. Her public image was organized in such a way that she could be linked to a discourse of European authority in matters of fashion and beauty while simultaneously being linked to a "natural" sexuality that could be concealed but not denied. That sexuality was referenced in part by the open secret of Held's Jewishness, which acted to infuse her persona with an exoticism conducive to her stage performances.

Chapter 2, "Chorus Girls, New Women, True Bodies," considers the second phase of Ziegfeld's promotional efforts and his progression away from star imports such as Held toward the "all-American" girls whom he would trademark through his Follies revue. This was a timely transition, as American girlhood was increasingly contrasted with a foreign womanliness through the 1910s and 1920s, the girl serving as a particular guarantee of the youthful energy the culture wanted to claim for itself. Mizejewski connects the emergent Ziegfeld Girl to the New Woman of the 1920s, noting that "The refusal to define the chorus girl as either gold digger or actress is the refusal to confront the contradictions of what modernity and its promises of freedom actually meant to women in this era" (74).

The next chapter explores the strategies of costume and stage performance which worked to stabilize gender and sexuality in the Ziegfeld ethos. Here Mizejewski draws from the work of gender theorists such as Marjorie Garber to show how the Ziegfeld Girl's performance contained potential category crises of gender, class, and race. Chapter 4, "Racialized, Glorified American Girls," expands this analysis, turning to Ziegfeld's commitment to "glorification." As the author indicates, in his well-publicized efforts to "glorify" the American girl Ziegfeld was zealously defending the image of a national white race which depended crucially on its Others, both the New Immigrants—whose feared incursions into American society were the subject of extensive debate—and African Americans, at a time when bodies of color maintained increasing visibility (on Broadway, among other sites). Urgently responsive to this two-pronged threat, the sometimes hysterically nationalistic promotional rhetoric deployed by Ziegfeld claimed the franchise on a singular American identity—an identity so stable that even when she wore café-au-lait makeup or performed numbers that openly acknowledged a crisis of race (such as "It's Getting Dark"), the Ziegfeld Girl's whiteness was both guaranteed and indisputable.

Mizejewski's last chapter, "The Ziegfeld Girl and Hollywood Cinema," looks at the ways that mainstream cinema has drawn from Ziegfeld history as "a rich archive of shared cultural knowledge and assumptions about female spectacle" (137). She discusses the two films produced by Ziegfeld, Busby Berkeley backstage musicals of the early 1930s, and particularly *The Great Ziegfeld* (1936) and *Ziegfeld Girl* (1941), as biographical and historical tributes to Ziegfeld and the Follies. Mizejewski interestingly relates the narrative chaos produced in trying to tell the story of the Ziegfeld Girl herself: "American cultural and cinematic narratives could easily accommodate the story of Florenz Ziegfeld, artist of women's bodies, in Leonard's 1936 film. But as soon as the focus turned to the famous Girl herself, the female fantasies she represented, and their class and social implications, Hollywood literally did not know what story to tell" (176).

Mizejewski's book concludes with a short epilogue that roams across a variety of contemporary sites in which the enduring Ziegfeld legacy may be glimpsed. This brief section, though wholly successful in striking a note of closure, seems confined by Mizejewski's reliance on very literal examples—the author's encounter with an aging former Ziegfeld Girl, camp appropriations of the Ziegfeld style, Broadway shows such as *The Will Rogers Follies*. One has the impression that Mizejewski's argument could be used to shed light on a number of contemporary sites of female display that might include such phenomena as the international culture of supermodels or the mainstreaming of strip club culture through "gentlemen's clubs" and Hooters restaurants.

Ziegfeld Girl is well edited and its argumentation flows smoothly. Points are generally made with brevity, yet thoroughly and convincingly put across. I found that questions raised in my mind tended to be answered within a few pages. The primary contribution of the book is the significant addition it represents to what we know about the theatrical and cinematic history of stardom and the ways that stars carry

social history. As Mizejewski notes, "the Ziegfeld Girl was not only a signifier of urgent social issues, but was also herself an important site of these issues, an example of how the body itself operates as the material of history" (5). *Ziegfeld Girl* shows us that rather than being a purely historical or isolated phenomenon, the Ziegfeld model of male sponsorship matched by a carefully controlled female performance is a paradigm from which we still draw.

Diane Negra is Assistant Professor and Graduate Advisor in the Department of Radio, TV and Film at the University of North Texas. Her book, *Off-White Hollywood, American Culture and Ethnic Female Stardom*, is forthcoming from Routledge.

BOOK NOTES

Contributors to Book Notes: Robert C. Roman has witten for, among many others, *Films in Review*, *Dance* magazine, and the *Irish Echo*. Stephen Prince is the Book Review Editor of *Film Quarterly*.

Burgoyne, Robert. *Film Nation: Hollywood Looks at U.S. History*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997. $14.95. By offering paradigmatic portraits of the nation and the meaning of America, Hollywood films have been a powerful, mythologizing force in popular culture. Many of the industry's noted directors who came from immigrant families—Frank Capra and John Ford among them—were deeply concerned with the mythic underpinnings of American culture and explored these on film.

The depiction of national identity has remained a vital feature in contemporary films, and Robert Burgoyne investigates the ways that Hollywood has addressed nation and state in a group of 90s productions that offer, collectively, an appeal to what he terms "civic nationalism," an ideal that the nation belongs to everyone, regardless of color, creed, or ethnicity. The films that he examines—*Glory*, *Thunderheart*, *JFK*, *Born on the Fourth of July* and *Forrest Gump*—address this ideal in diverse ways, often by attending to the stories of groups and ethnicities—the black and Native Americans of *Glory* and *Thunderheart*, for example—who have been displaced from center stage in traditional histories.

The book's outstanding feature is Burgoyne's attentiveness to the complexity of the discourse offered by these films, the multiplicative voices through which they speak in an effort to conjoin the narratives of groups excluded from power with the dominant skeins of American cultural identity. In a very perceptive analysis of the whipping scene in *Glory*, for example, in which white officer Robert Shaw orders the beating of a black soldier, Burgoyne emphasizes the ways in which the action illuminates the divergent historical experiences of white and black. Shaw intends the punishment to be a singular act enforcing military discipline but finds that the soldier's back is heavily scarred from previous floggings, a revelation that makes Shaw's intended discipline inseparable from a legacy of racial domination. The scene pointedly shows that "the historical past marks black and white differently, but with the same pen."

Like his account of *Glory*, Burgoyne's analysis of *JFK* is particularly illuminating, treating that film's fractured montage editing and pastiche of media formats—a compendium of video and celluloid imagery—as "an expression of a national narrative in disorder and disarray," offering the memory of violence—the death of Kennedy—as an emblem for the rupturing of national identity. The holistic community, the ideal of civic nationalism, has become a lost object in *JFK* and is the tragedy that the film addresses.

Burgoyne's book is elegant and compact and offers readers a complex and well-argued account of the diverse ideological skeins to be found in Hollywood film, particularly when it assumes its mythologizing role as filmmakers grapple with those huge and elusive questions of what it means to be an American. The book's brevity and force make it a useful text for courses devoted to American society on film.

Stephen Prince

McCabe, John. *Cagney*. New York: Knopf, 1997. $27.50. The insouciant French aptly called James Cagney "the tiger of the screen." British critic Kenneth Tynan said he "moved more graciously than any other actor in Hollywood." And the American Will Rogers remarked, "Every time I see him work, it looks like a bunch of firecrackers going off in all directions." Biographer John McCabe, who admits he always revered Cagney, served as ghostwriter for the 1976 autobiography, *Cagney by Cagney*, and here expands his notes, ably chronicling the actor's poverty-stricken childhood in New York and his early days in vaudeville and as a dancer on Broadway. Once he was drafted by Hollywood (in *Sinner's Holiday*, his 1930 screen debut for Warner Bros.—he played a spoiled mama's boy turned gangster and murderer), Cagney swiftly became the first star to embody, visually and vocally, the pace and energy of the city. Although appearing mainly a series of gangster, wise guy, and con artist roles, he transcended typecasting and from his breakout Prohibition mobster in *The Public Enemy* (1931) through his crazed mother-fixated killer in *White Heat* (1949), Cagney demonstrated a street-smart dynamism that also served him well in such different roles as George M. Cohan (his idol) in *Yankee Doodle Dandy* (1942).

McCabe records that Cagney never followed the Hollywood star pattern, socializing with pals Pat O'Brien, Ralph Bellamy, Spencer Tracy, and others, but avoiding most social functions (O'Brien called him "a faraway fella"). His personal life was somewhat troubled: despite maintaining close ties with family members, he kept only minimal contact with his adopted children. It is only here that McCabe's otherwise honest and faithful accounting is somewhat evasive.

Robert C. Roman

social history. As Mizejewski notes, "the Ziegfeld Girl was not only a signifier of urgent social issues, but was also herself an important site of these issues, an example of how the body itself operates as the material of history" (5). *Ziegfeld Girl* shows us that rather than being a purely historical or isolated phenomenon, the Ziegfeld model of male sponsorship matched by a carefully controlled female performance is a paradigm from which we still draw.

Diane Negra is Assistant Professor and Graduate Advisor in the Department of Radio, TV and Film at the University of North Texas. Her book, *Off-White Hollywood, American Culture and Ethnic Female Stardom*, is forthcoming from Routledge.

BOOK NOTES

Contributors to Book Notes: Robert C. Roman has witten for, among many others, *Films in Review*, *Dance* magazine, and the *Irish Echo*. Stephen Prince is the Book Review Editor of *Film Quarterly*.

Burgoyne, Robert. *Film Nation: Hollywood Looks at U.S. History*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997. $14.95. By offering paradigmatic portraits of the nation and the meaning of America, Hollywood films have been a powerful, mythologizing force in popular culture. Many of the industry's noted directors who came from immigrant families—Frank Capra and John Ford among them—were deeply concerned with the mythic underpinnings of American culture and explored these on film.

The depiction of national identity has remained a vital feature in contemporary films, and Robert Burgoyne investigates the ways that Hollywood has addressed nation and state in a group of 90s productions that offer, collectively, an appeal to what he terms "civic nationalism," an ideal that the nation belongs to everyone, regardless of color, creed, or ethnicity. The films that he examines—*Glory*, *Thunderheart*, *JFK*, *Born on the Fourth of July* and *Forrest Gump*—address this ideal in diverse ways, often by attending to the stories of groups and ethnicities—the black and Native Americans of *Glory* and *Thunderheart*, for example—who have been displaced from center stage in traditional histories.

The book's outstanding feature is Burgoyne's attentiveness to the complexity of the discourse offered by these films, the multiplicative voices through which they speak in an effort to conjoin the narratives of groups excluded from power with the dominant skeins of American cultural identity. In a very perceptive analysis of the whipping scene in *Glory*, for example, in which white officer Robert Shaw orders the beating of a black soldier, Burgoyne emphasizes the ways in which the action illuminates the divergent historical experiences of white and black. Shaw intends the punishment to be a singular act enforcing military discipline but finds that the soldier's back is heavily scarred from previous floggings, a revelation that makes Shaw's intended discipline inseparable from a legacy of racial domination. The scene pointedly shows that "the historical past marks black and white differently, but with the same pen."

Like his account of *Glory*, Burgoyne's analysis of *JFK* is particularly illuminating, treating that film's fractured montage editing and pastiche of media formats—a compendium of video and celluloid imagery—as "an expression of a national narrative in disorder and disarray," offering the memory of violence—the death of Kennedy—as an emblem for the rupturing of national identity. The holistic community, the ideal of civic nationalism, has become a lost object in *JFK* and is the tragedy that the film addresses.

Burgoyne's book is elegant and compact and offers readers a complex and well-argued account of the diverse ideological skeins to be found in Hollywood film, particularly when it assumes its mythologizing role as filmmakers grapple with those huge and elusive questions of what it means to be an American. The book's brevity and force make it a useful text for courses devoted to American society on film.

Stephen Prince

McCabe, John. *Cagney*. New York: Knopf, 1997. $27.50. The insouciant French aptly called James Cagney "the tiger of the screen." British critic Kenneth Tynan said he "moved more graciously than any other actor in Hollywood." And the American Will Rogers remarked, "Every time I see him work, it looks like a bunch of firecrackers going off in all directions." Biographer John McCabe, who admits he always revered Cagney, served as ghostwriter for the 1976 autobiography, *Cagney by Cagney*, and here expands his notes, ably chronicling the actor's poverty-stricken childhood in New York and his early days in vaudeville and as a dancer on Broadway. Once he was drafted by Hollywood (in *Sinner's Holiday*, his 1930 screen debut for Warner Bros.—he played a spoiled mama's boy turned gangster and murderer), Cagney swiftly became the first star to embody, visually and vocally, the pace and energy of the city. Although appearing mainly a series of gangster, wise guy, and con artist roles, he transcended typecasting and from his breakout Prohibition mobster in *The Public Enemy* (1931) through his crazed mother-fixated killer in *White Heat* (1949), Cagney demonstrated a street-smart dynamism that also served him well in such different roles as George M. Cohan (his idol) in *Yankee Doodle Dandy* (1942).

McCabe records that Cagney never followed the Hollywood star pattern, socializing with pals Pat O'Brien, Ralph Bellamy, Spencer Tracy, and others, but avoiding most social functions (O'Brien called him "a faraway fella"). His personal life was somewhat troubled: despite maintaining close ties with family members, he kept only minimal contact with his adopted children. It is only here that McCabe's otherwise honest and faithful accounting is somewhat evasive.

Robert C. Roman

social history. As Mizejewski notes, "the Ziegfeld Girl was not only a signifier of urgent social issues, but was also herself an important site of these issues, an example of how the body itself operates as the material of history" (5). *Ziegfeld Girl* shows us that rather than being a purely historical or isolated phenomenon, the Ziegfeld model of male sponsorship matched by a carefully controlled female performance is a paradigm from which we still draw.

Diane Negra is Assistant Professor and Graduate Advisor in the Department of Radio, TV and Film at the University of North Texas. Her book, *Off-White Hollywood, American Culture and Ethnic Female Stardom*, is forthcoming from Routledge.

BOOK NOTES

Contributors to Book Notes: Robert C. Roman has witten for, among many others, *Films in Review*, *Dance* magazine, and the *Irish Echo*. Stephen Prince is the Book Review Editor of *Film Quarterly*.

Burgoyne, Robert. *Film Nation: Hollywood Looks at U.S. History*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997. $14.95. By offering paradigmatic portraits of the nation and the meaning of America, Hollywood films have been a powerful, mythologizing force in popular culture. Many of the industry's noted directors who came from immigrant families—Frank Capra and John Ford among them—were deeply concerned with the mythic underpinnings of American culture and explored these on film.

The depiction of national identity has remained a vital feature in contemporary films, and Robert Burgoyne investigates the ways that Hollywood has addressed nation and state in a group of 90s productions that offer, collectively, an appeal to what he terms "civic nationalism," an ideal that the nation belongs to everyone, regardless of color, creed, or ethnicity. The films that he examines—*Glory*, *Thunderheart*, *JFK*, *Born on the Fourth of July* and *Forrest Gump*—address this ideal in diverse ways, often by attending to the stories of groups and ethnicities—the black and Native Americans of *Glory* and *Thunderheart*, for example—who have been displaced from center stage in traditional histories.

The book's outstanding feature is Burgoyne's attentiveness to the complexity of the discourse offered by these films, the multiplicative voices through which they speak in an effort to conjoin the narratives of groups excluded from power with the dominant skeins of American cultural identity. In a very perceptive analysis of the whipping scene in *Glory*, for example, in which white officer Robert Shaw orders the beating of a black soldier, Burgoyne emphasizes the ways in which the action illuminates the divergent historical experiences of white and black. Shaw intends the punishment to be a singular act enforcing military discipline but finds that the soldier's back is heavily scarred from previous floggings, a revelation that makes Shaw's intended discipline inseparable from a legacy of racial domination. The scene pointedly shows that "the historical past marks black and white differently, but with the same pen."

Like his account of *Glory*, Burgoyne's analysis of *JFK* is particularly illuminating, treating that film's fractured montage editing and pastiche of media formats—a compendium of video and celluloid imagery—as "an expression of a national narrative in disorder and disarray," offering the memory of violence—the death of Kennedy—as an emblem for the rupturing of national identity. The holistic community, the ideal of civic nationalism, has become a lost object in *JFK* and is the tragedy that the film addresses.

Burgoyne's book is elegant and compact and offers readers a complex and well-argued account of the diverse ideological skeins to be found in Hollywood film, particularly when it assumes its mythologizing role as filmmakers grapple with those huge and elusive questions of what it means to be an American. The book's brevity and force make it a useful text for courses devoted to American society on film.

Stephen Prince

McCabe, John. *Cagney*. New York: Knopf, 1997. $27.50. The insouciant French aptly called James Cagney "the tiger of the screen." British critic Kenneth Tynan said he "moved more graciously than any other actor in Hollywood." And the American Will Rogers remarked, "Every time I see him work, it looks like a bunch of firecrackers going off in all directions." Biographer John McCabe, who admits he always revered Cagney, served as ghostwriter for the 1976 autobiography, *Cagney by Cagney*, and here expands his notes, ably chronicling the actor's poverty-stricken childhood in New York and his early days in vaudeville and as a dancer on Broadway. Once he was drafted by Hollywood (in *Sinner's Holiday*, his 1930 screen debut for Warner Bros.—he played a spoiled mama's boy turned gangster and murderer), Cagney swiftly became the first star to embody, visually and vocally, the pace and energy of the city. Although appearing mainly a series of gangster, wise guy, and con artist roles, he transcended typecasting and from his breakout Prohibition mobster in *The Public Enemy* (1931) through his crazed mother-fixated killer in *White Heat* (1949), Cagney demonstrated a street-smart dynamism that also served him well in such different roles as George M. Cohan (his idol) in *Yankee Doodle Dandy* (1942).

McCabe records that Cagney never followed the Hollywood star pattern, socializing with pals Pat O'Brien, Ralph Bellamy, Spencer Tracy, and others, but avoiding most social functions (O'Brien called him "a faraway fella"). His personal life was somewhat troubled: despite maintaining close ties with family members, he kept only minimal contact with his adopted children. It is only here that McCabe's otherwise honest and faithful accounting is somewhat evasive.

Robert C. Roman

Letters

Dear Editor,

Re *The Blair Witch Project*: The only mystery, to me, is the box-office returns.

If the handheld camera was once a condition for cinema vérité, *The Blair Witch Project* has gone it one better and presents us with the very, very shaky handheld camera. Why a fictional crew of three filmmakers couldn't either afford a tripod or else learn to hold a camera better is not clear to me. Nor is it clear why this repetitive, uninspired, headache-causing home movie of trees, trees, trees and more trees surrounding three unpleasantly hysterical and weasely kids whose fears are definitely *not* contagious, has raked in (as of the date of writing) a hundred million dollars.

They are fooling us: it was an organized stunt; those faked first-week returns were used as a snowball effect to create real second-week returns, in the same way that publishers sometimes succeed in creating a bestseller out of nothing.

If a movie doesn't warrant being taken seriously (Janet Maslin in the *New York Times* called it "thin"—"transparent," I'd say), its marketing is to be taken very seriously. I used the word "faked"; the *Times* calls it the result of "synergy." It comes down to the same thing—one description is polite, one realistic. A blitz of networking and emailing and any other technique available has been used to create a false impression of a little underdog movie becoming a hit by popular acclaim.

Our critics, or most of them, forever afraid of being thought elitist (that is, educated), must have convinced themselves that here was the real stuff, the voice of the people, and that any non-acceptance of such a People's Choice would merely rebound upon themselves.

I realize we live in an age of packaging. Here the packaging was virtual, and the contents of the package, minimal.

Hans Koning
Southport, Conn.

Dear Editor,

I was struck, in reading Abe Mark Nornes' article, "For an Abusive Subtitling," in the Spring 1999 issue, that in his footnote #20 (page 33), he misidentifies a book we published, *Coffee, Brandy, and Cigars*, by Herman Weinberg, as *Booze, Cigars, and Movies*. Herman must be rotating in his grave! As Goethe said, "they arouse an irrepressible desire for the original."

Robert A. Haller
Director of Collections/Special Projects
Anthology Film Archives

Dear Editor,

Re Heidi Kenaga's comments on my essay "Auteur Cinema and the 'Film Generation' in 1970s Hollywood" in Jon Lewis's anthology *The New American Cinema* (*FQ* 52, 4), I wanted to say that Tim Corrigan is one of the few scholars whose work I am happy to have my own compared unfavorably to. I also wanted to congratulate Ms. Kenaga for recognizing my contribution for what it is—a survey of 1970s auteurism and its commercial co-optation, exactly as I was contracted to write. The only thing that puzzles me is her idea that I draw a "nonstartling conclusion" about the industrial context of auteurism, when I thought that I had drawn none at all.

David A. Cook
Director, Film Studies Program
Emory University

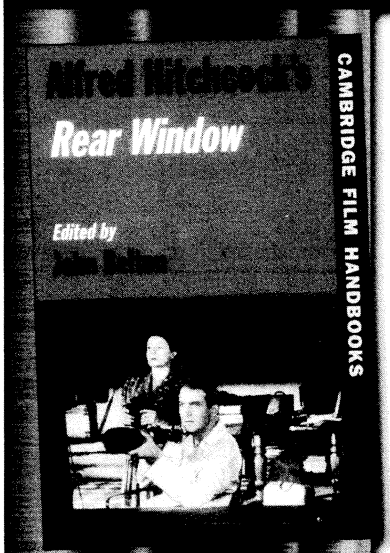
STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT AND CIRCULATION, 9/15/99

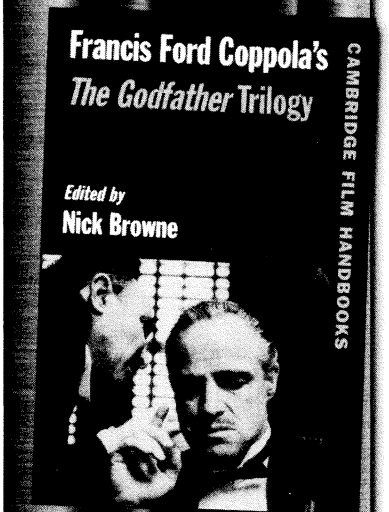
Title: Film Quarterly. Frequency: Quarterly. Four issues published annually. Subscription price: $26.00 individuals, $70.00 institutions. Location of office of publication: 2000 Center Street, Suite 303, Berkeley, Alameda County, CA 94704. Headquarters of publishers: 2120 Berkeley Way, Berkeley, CA 94720. Publisher: University of California Press, 2120 Berkeley Way, Berkeley, CA 94720. Editor: Ann Martin, University of California Press, Berkeley, CA 94720. Owner: The Regents of the University of California, Berkeley, CA 94720. The purpose, function and non-profit status of this organization and the exempt status for federal income tax purposes have not changed during preceding 12 months.

Extent and nature of circulation:	Av. no. copies each issue preceding 12 months	Actual no. copies of single issue pub. nearest to filing date
A. Total no. copies printed	6171	5796
B. Paid circulation:		
1. Sales through dealers and carriers, street vendors and counter sales	3213	3248
2. Mail subscriptions	2402	2092
C. Total paid circulation	5615	5340
D. Free distribution	0	0
E. Total distribution	5734	5460
F. Copies not distributed	437	336
G. Total	6171	5796
Percent paid and/or requested circulation	98%	98%

I certify that all information furnished on this form is true and complete. I understand that anyone who furnishes false or misleading information on this form or who omits material or information requested on the form may be subject to criminal sanctions (including fines and imprisonment) and/or civil sanctions (including multiple damages and civil penalties).
Rebecca Simon, Journals Director, UC Press. 10/1/99

BEST IN FILM FROM CAMBRIDGE





Alfred Hitchcock's *Rear Window*

John Belton, *Editor*

Alfred Hitchcock's *Rear Window* is one of the icons of American filmmaking. A perfect example of Hollywood cinema at its best, it is an engaging piece of entertainment as well as a fascinating meditation on the nature of the film itself. A suspense thriller about a chair-bound observer who suspects his neighbor of murdering his wife, the narrative becomes the vehicle for Hitchcock's exploration of the basic ingredients of cinema, from voyeurism and dreamlike fantasy, to the process of narration itself. This volume provides a fresh analysis of *Rear Window,* which is examined from a variety of perspectives in a series of essays published here for the first time.

Cambridge Film Handbooks

0-521-56423-9 Hardback $49.95
0-521-56453-0 Paperback $16.95

Francis Ford Coppola's *The Godfather* Trilogy

Nick Browne, *Editor*

In six essays written especially for this volume, *The Godfather* trilogy is reexamined from a variety of perspectives. Providing original analyses on the form and significance of Coppola's achievement, they demonstrate how the filmmaker revised the conventions of the American crime film in the Vietnam era, his treatment of the capitalism of the criminal underworld and its inherent violence, the power struggles within Hollywood over the film, and the contribution of opera to the epic force and cinematic style of Coppola's vision of an American criminal dynasty.

Cambridge Film Handbooks

0-521-55084-X Hardback $49.95
0-521-55950-2 Paperback $16.95

The Cinema of Satyajit Ray

Between Tradition and Modernity

Darius Cooper

The most comprehensive treatment of Satyajit Ray's work, *The Cinema of Satyajit Ray* makes accessible the oeuvre of one of the most prolific and creative filmmakers of the twentieth century. Providing analyses of selected films, including those that comprise *The Apu Trilogy, Chess Players,* and *Jalsaghar,* among others, Darius Cooper outlines Western influences on Ray's work, such as the plight of women functioning within a patriarchal society, Ray's political vision of the "doubly colonized," and his attack and critique of the Bengali/Indian middle class of today.

Cambridge Studies in Film

0-521-62026-0 Hardback $59.95
0-521-62980-2 Paperback $22.95

Jane Campion's *The Piano*

Harriet Margolis, *Editor*

Jane Campion's *The Piano* is one of the most unusual love stories in the history of cinema. This volume examines the film from a variety of critical perspectives. In six essays, specially commissioned for this project, an international team of scholars examine topics such as the controversial representation of the Maori, the use of music in the film, the portrayal of the mother-daughter relationship, and the significance of the film in terms of international cinema, the culture of New Zealand, and the work of Jane Campion.

Cambridge Film Handbooks

0-521-59258-5 Hardback $54.95
0-521-59721-8 Paperback $19.95

A History of Shakespeare on Screen

A Century of Film and Television

Kenneth S. Rothwell

This book chronicles how filmmakers have reimagined Shakespeare's plays in moving images from their earliest exhibition in nickelodeons to today's multi-million dollar productions. The book is international in scope, looking not only at screen adaptations in the UK and the United States but also at the films of Kozintsev, Kurosawa, Zeffirelli and others. A filmography, bibliography and index of names make it invaluable as a one-volume reference work for specialists, while its accessible style will ensure its appeal to enthusiasts and filmgoers as well as to a more academic audience.

0-521-59404-9 Hardback $59.95

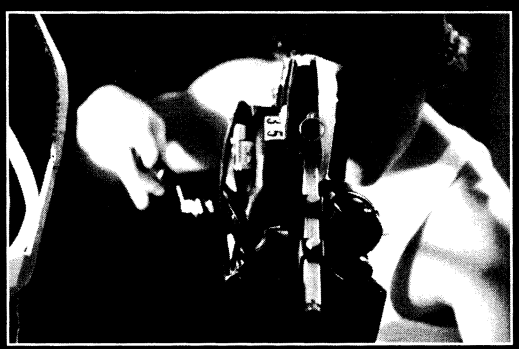
Available in bookstores or from

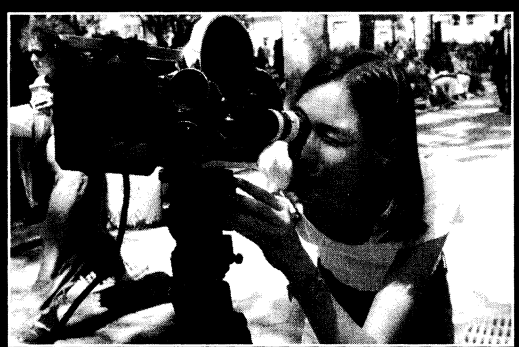
CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

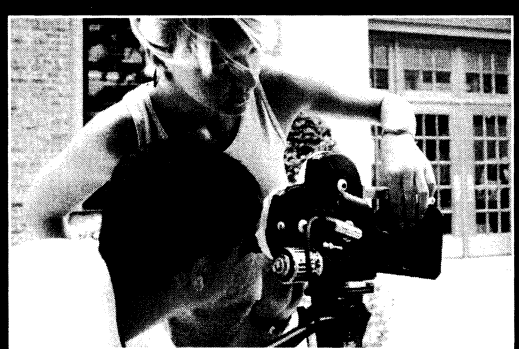
40 West 20th Street,
New York, NY 10011-4211
Call toll-free 800-872-7423
Web site: www.cup.org
MasterCard/VISA accepted.
Prices subject to change.

LEARN FILMMAKING

WRITE • DIRECT • SHOOT • EDIT







NOW IN

LOS ANGELES

YOUR OWN SHORT FILMS IN OUR HANDS-ON INTENSIVE 4 & 6 & 8 WEEK TOTAL IMMERSION PROGRAMS FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH LITTLE OR NO PRIOR FILM MAKING EXPERIENCE. WORK WITH 16MM ARRIFLEX CAMERAS IN SMALL CLASSES DESIGNED AND TAUGHT BY AWARD-WINNING INSTRUCTORS. TUITION $4,000.

- **UNIVERSAL STUDIOS** - LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA
- **NEW YORK FILM ACADEMY IN NYC**
- **PRINCETON UNIVERSITY** - PRINCETON, NEW JERSEY*
- **HARVARD FACULTY CLUB** - CAMBRIDGE, MASS.*
- **AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF PARIS** - PARIS, FRANCE*
- **CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY** - CAMBRIDGE, ENGLAND*
- **HEBREW UNIVERSITY OF JERUSALEM** - ISRAEL*

*SUMMER ONLY

SUMMER HIGH SCHOOL WORKSHOPS ALSO AVAILABLE

All workshops are solely owned and operated by the New York Film Academy and not affiliated with Universal Studios

NEW YORK FILM ACADEMY

WEST COAST | EAST COAST

100 UNIVERSAL CITY PLAZA, UNIVERSAL CITY, CA 91608
Tel: 818-733-2600 Fax: 818-733-4074 Email: studio@nyfa.com

100 EAST 17 STREET, NYC 10003 WEB: www.nyfa.com
Tel: 212-674-4300 Fax: 212-477-1414 Email: film@nyfa.com

A Woman Who . . .

Essays, Interviews, Scripts

Yvonne Rainer

Yvonne Rainer's work as a filmmaker, feminist artist, choreographer, and performer has won international acclaim. When she started making films in the mid-1970s, works such as *Lives of Performers* and *Film About a Woman Who . . .* quickly established her at the forefront of independent cinema. Her work has been the subject of more than a dozen retrospectives, most recently at the Film Society of Lincoln Center. Rainer's works have unblinkingly explored such issues as menopause, breast cancer, lesbianism, sexual dissatisfaction, and political violence. The latest volume in PAJ's Art + Performance series, *A Woman Who . . .* is a wide-ranging collection of Rainer's interviews, essays, talks, and other writings. The scripts of her two most recent feature-length films, *Privilege* and *MURDER and murder*, are included.

PAJ Books: Art + Performance
Bonnie Marranca and Gautam Dasgupta, Series Editors

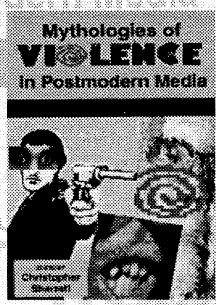
$19.95 paperback

"I think of art as an ongoing exploration rather than a search for a conclusion, an ongoing set of questions, finding new ways to ask the questions, and visual answers."—Yvonne Rainer

The Johns Hopkins University Press
1-800-537-5487 • www.press.jhu.edu

Mythologies of Violence in Postmodern Media

Edited by Christopher Sharrett



"A stunning collection! From the Hong Kong action cinema to the trial of Jeffrey Dahmer, the contributors explore the most familiar and the most far-flung sites of violence and its representations."—Krin Gabbard, SUNY, Stony Brook

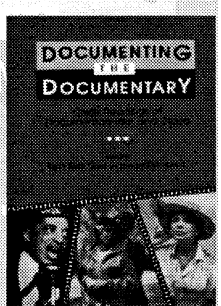
456 pages, 31 illustrations
$24.95 paperback

Documenting the Documentary

Close Readings of Documentary Film and Video

Edited by Barry Keith Grant and Jeannette Sloniowski

Foreword by Bill Nichols



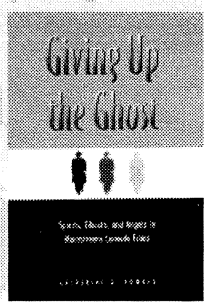
"Grant and Sloniowski have assembled a very fine collection, representing the best current scholarly writing on documentary."—John Hess, University of Maryland

490 pages, 56 illustrations
$27.50 paperback

Giving Up the Ghost

Spirits, Ghosts, and Angels in Mainstream Comedy Films

Katherine A. Fowkes



"What Carol J. Clover did for the genre of horror films in *Men, Women and Chain Saws*, Fowkes does for films like *Ghost, Always*, and *Truly, Madly, Deeply*. Her study of salient topics like invisibility, delay, and communication (or miscommunication) fascinates."—***Choice***

208 pages
$24.95 paperback

Alexander Kluge

The Last Modernist

Peter C. Lutze

Lutze's book is balanced, insightful, and intelligent, and it should return Kluge to the center of debates about the strategies and directions of modern and postmodern cinema."
—Timothy Corrigan, Temple University

304 pages, 27 illustrations
$29.95 paperback

Bertolucci's "The Last Emperor"

Multiple Takes

Edited by Bruce Sklarew, Bonnie S. Kaufman, Ellen Handler Spitz, and Diane Borden

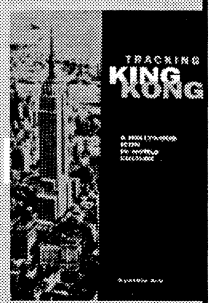
An interdisciplinary study of Bernardo Bertolucci's psychoanalytical and historical film.

278 pages, 25 illustrations
$19.95 paperback

Tracking King Kong

A Hollywood Icon in World Culture

Cynthia Erb



"Cynthia Erb's provocative account of the cultural legacy of RKO's classic King Kong (1933) is a valuable addition to the growing body of work on historical approaches to film studies. . . . A lively and compelling read."
—***Historical Journal of Film, Radio, and Television***

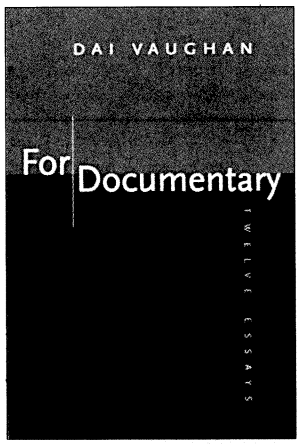
240 pages
$24.95 paperback

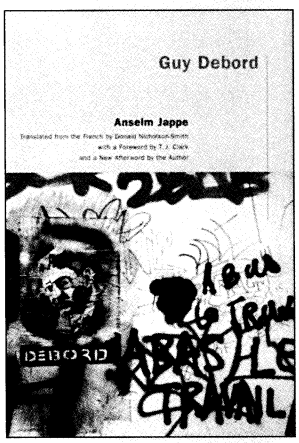
Wayne State University Press

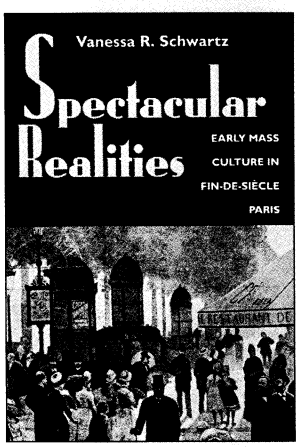
The Leonard N. Simons Building • 4809 Woodward Avenue • Detroit, MI • 48201-1309
(800)WSU-READ • fax: (313) 577-6131
http://wsupress.wayne.edu

Wayne State University is an equal opportunity/affirmative action employer.

film studies
FROM CALIFORNIA







For Documentary
Twelve Essays
DAI VAUGHAN

"A jewel of a book that is unlike any other in the field of documentary studies. It will bring to a far broader audience a rigorous critical intelligence and sensibility, seasoned by years of experience, imbued with a bracing clarity of thought and expression." —Michael Renov, University of Southern California

These essays, which span twenty-five years of writing and a lifetime of experience, offer fresh and challenging insights into documentary. Film theorists and filmmakers, indeed everyone who cares about how our society represents itself to itself, will find *For Documentary* engrossing as well as illuminating.
$40.00 cloth, $15.95 paper

Guy Debord
ANSELM JAPPE
Translated by Donald Nicholson-Smith
With a Foreword by T. J. Clark,
And a new Afterword by the author

This is the first serious intellectual biography of Guy Debord, prime mover of the Situationist International (1957–1972) and author of *The Society of the Spectacle,* perhaps the seminal book of May 1968 in France. The book offers a lively, critical, and unusually reliable account of Debord's "last avant-garde" on its way from radical bohemianism to revolutionary theory, and discusses Debord's films.
$45.00 cloth, $17.95 paper

NEW IN PAPERBACK

The Ufa Story
A History of Germany's Greatest Film Company, 1918–1945
KLAUS KREIMEIER
Translated by Robert and Rita Kimber

"Billy Wilder and Fritz Lang are but two names from among scores of film artists who fled Germany and brought their talents to American movies. . . . It's hard to imagine the shape of American cinema without the contribution of Ufa's exiles."
—*New York Times Book Review*

Weimar and Now: German Cultural Criticism
$19.95 paper, illustrated

Spectacular Realities
Early Mass Culture in *Fin-de-Siècle* Paris
VANESSA R. SCHWARTZ

"Schwartz weaves a multilayered history of the evolution of mass entertainments in Paris during the 19th century. . . . An engrossing study."—*Choice*

During the second half of the nineteenth century, Paris fostered a culture of crowd-pleasing and multisensory amusements—wax museums, panoramas, early film, even the city morgue—that would apprehend and represent real life as spectacle. Schwartz argues that "spectacular realities" are part of the foundation of modern mass society.
$17.95 paper, illustrated

At bookstores or order 1-800-822-6657 **www.ucpress.edu**

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PRESS

Cinema of Outsiders

The Rise of American Independent Film

Emanuel Levy

Levy gives us a comprehensive examination of the American independent film movement, with a level-headed, in-depth assessment of the movies it has produced. This is an indispensable text for anyone who wants to understand the independent world.

—David Ansen, *Newsweek*

0-8147-5123-7 / $34.95 cloth

Tinker Belles and Evil Queens

The Walt Disney Company from the Inside Out

Sean Griffin

Presents Disney culture—so often thought of as a bastion of mainstream, heterosexual family values—in a fascinating and illuminating new light. *Tinker Belles and Evil Queens* is sharp and rigorously researched work. A veritable alternative history of Disney.

—Dana Polan, University of Southern California

0-8147-3123-6 / $18.95 paperback

Cinematic Political Thought

Narrating Race, Nation and Gender

Michael J. Shapiro

Investigating aspects of contemporary politics, Shapiro articulates a critical philosophical perspective with politically disposed treatments of contemporary cinema such as *Lone Star, Father of the Bride,* and *Hoop Dreams.*

0-8147-9751-2 / 18.50 paperback

Vectors of Memory

Nancy Wood

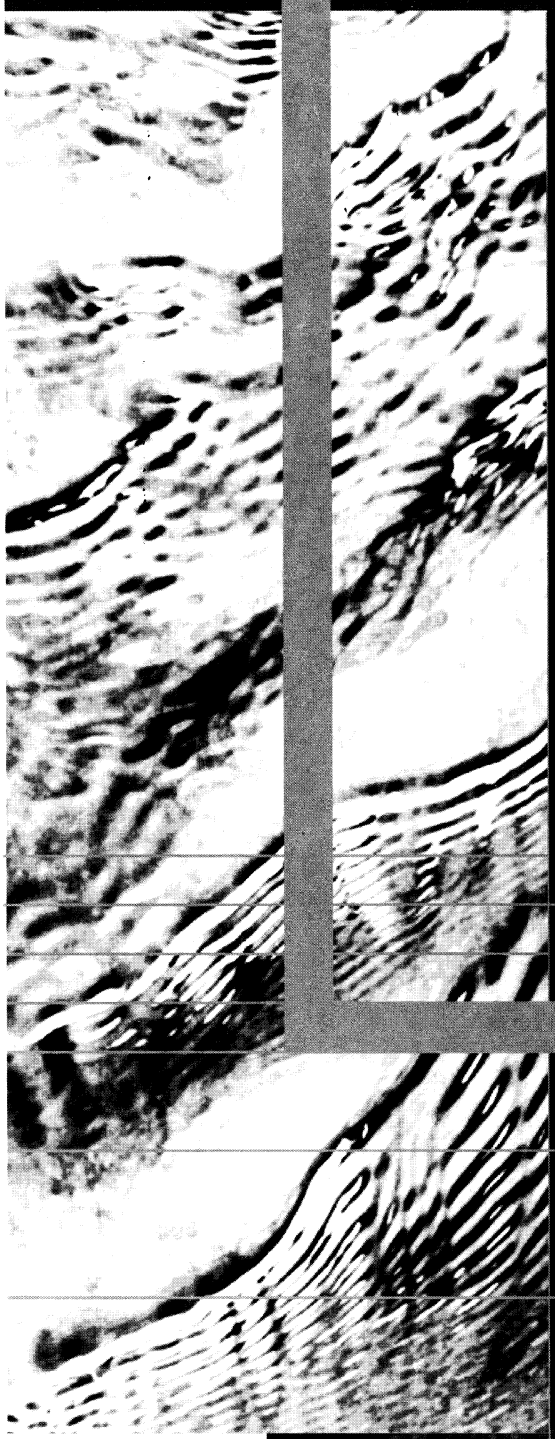
Examining in detail a range of conduits of memorial activity such as historiography, war crimes trials, novels, and films that have focused public attention and debate in this era of so-called "commemorative obsession," Wood elucidates the identity politics expressed through these channels with an interdisciplinary scope.

Distributed for Berg Publishers
0-185973-294-7 / $19.50 paperback

NYU PRESS

1-800-996-NYUP www.nyupress.nyu.edu

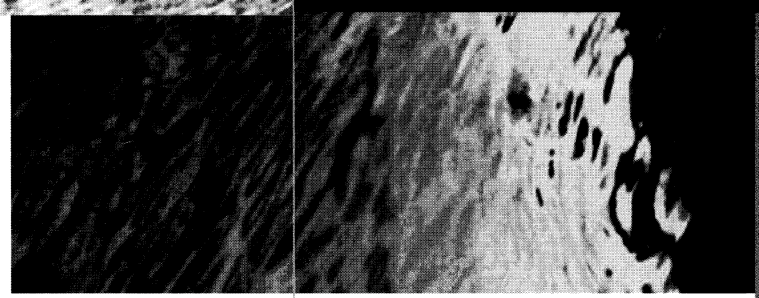
THE SCHOOL OF SOUND



London | 12-15 | April | 2000

A unique symposium exploring the art of sound with the moving image

Featuring an international assembly of provocative and influential speakers from film, video, radio and audio art



The School of Sound

Tel/Fax +44 (0)20. 7323. 3437

Epesound@aol.com

www.schoolofsound.co.uk